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## **Debussy and the techniques of symbolism.**

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# **DEBUSSY AND THE TECHNIQUES OF SYMBOLISM**

**An essay in metatheory**

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## Abstract

Debussy's music is notoriously difficult to analyse convincingly, and to date we have only an imperfect understanding of the structural principles arising from his work. The thesis argues that modern conceptions of rhetoric are helpful in revealing the distinctive types of continuity in Debussy, and investigates the means by which this continuity is maintained or challenged by the overt discontinuity installed by Debussy's habitual statement of ideas in opposition.

These issues are approached from two directions: 1) the Symbolist culture in which Debussy's music is grounded (and which it begins to transform); 2) the post-structuralist critique of unitary modes of structure.

1) Symbolist culture is examined in practice and in theory: analyses of the relational sound complexes in Baudelaire, Mallarmé and Poe, and discussions of rhetorical strategies in Maeterlinck and Wyzewa, reveal the reciprocal borrowing of sonic techniques in Symbolist music and poetry. Debussy's relation to, and opposition to, Wagnerian compositional procedure is considered in this context. This aesthetic investigation is contextualised by a theoretical discussion of the nature of the musical sign and symbol, in order to establish the link between Symbolist structural procedures and the post-structuralist understanding of signification.

2) Post-structuralist theory is applied to Debussy's music as an implicit critique of structuralist interpretations, and because it seems more apposite both historically and culturally than the Germanic or classicizing techniques central to present-day analysis. The rhetorical figures of metaphor and metonymy are considered extensively in theory and are used as heuristic devices to uncover the types of continuity (and unity, where that is suggested) in the musical structure of the Prelude to *Pelléas et Mélisande*.

The primary aim of the thesis is to establish a historically-informed analytical procedure in which the theoretical insistence of traditional methods is restrained and subordinated to non-hierarchical relational complexes expressed theoretically as a system of tropes.

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## Foreword

1. The format of this thesis is modelled on that of Jean-François Lyotard, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988). Cross-references among paragraphs are indicated as, for example, §8.1.

2. All translations are my own except where indicated in footnotes.

3. The thesis incorporates some previously published material, from Craig Ayrey, 'Debussy's significant connections: metaphor and metonymy in analytical method', in Anthony Pople (ed.), *Theory, Analysis and Meaning in Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 127-151. This material is distributed widely through the thesis and has been largely re-organised and re-written.

4. I am grateful to Professor Arnold Whittall for his advice and patience over many years, and to Professor John Deathridge who eased the process of the submission of the thesis for examination.

## 1: Prologue

**1.1** Debussy's music is notoriously resistant to the ideal of unity inherent in theory-based analysis. This resistance has to do with the received view of Debussy as a seminal composer of the 20th century, innovator, iconoclast, and above all as the originator of modernist modes of musical structure. Applications of modern analytical techniques therefore tend to relegate Debussy to the status of a predecessor. Debussy — retrospective and progressive, simple and complex — is somewhat paradoxically made to appear as the very image of the *post*-modern artist in whom the point at issue, ambiguity, is resolved into an easy plurality. There is truth in this contemporary view: the tension of style, the pluralism of structural procedure are self-evident. But like the early modernist poets (Yeats, Pound, Eliot), Debussy's well-documented reactionary position toward the 19th century is not the only precondition of innovation: his originality is doubly centered, conservative (Gounod, Massenet, Wagner) and iconoclastic, mediated by the aesthetic philosophy of Mallarmé and, I think, by the philosophical aesthetics of Bergson. Debussy's modernism, and continuing modernity, depend on this mediated, questioning, and subversive duality, which despite the structural primacy of opposition in the music, is both more integrated and subtle than plurality would allow. There is no better term for this attitude than 'deconstructive', a movement of thought that is sceptical of essences and committed to the notion of the undecidable.

### 1.2 Adorno considered Debussy the master of 'omission':

There are composers, and indeed whole genres, which are more accurately defined by what does not occur than by the positive events that take place in them. Abundance is not the only sign of a composer's imaginative powers; no less important is the force with which his intentions blast a void into all the possibles with which they are concerned. The power of an original musical intuition figures in the fine dust of discarded opportunities and it is these which often have to be deciphered if the nature of

the composition is to be revealed. Of the more recent composers Debussy is the pre-eminent master of such discarded opportunities.<sup>1</sup>

Adorno's 'void' implies a deconstructive mode of composition in which 'possibles' are bracketed, dispersed and suppressed. His earlier treatment of Debussy<sup>2</sup> reveals that omission must be understood temporally, as a stage on the way toward Stravinsky's 'dissociation of time' (juxtaposition of isolated elements), and as the 'experience of frustrated expectation'. What arises in place of Wagnerian 'fulfillment' is a spatial conception of form, a 'juxtaposition of colors and surfaces' which Adorno derives from painting, buying in to the myth of Debussy's essential relation to Impressionism. What Adorno finds 'omitted' in Debussy is therefore the temporal in its teleological guise — a sense of history, so to speak — but which, like all 'Impressionist' music retains 'something of the subjective experience of time'.<sup>3</sup> The subtlety with which Adorno places Debussy between Wagner and Stravinsky, indicates that there is something more at stake than simply the temporal or spatial conception of structure: Debussy's music would appear to be primarily spatial but animated by a temporalised subjectivity. Such a formulation requires that Adorno's intuition should be matched by a similarly deconstructive mode of interpretation that looks behind the text to examine the fine dust of dispersed implications.

Omission also leads to new relations between what is 'left'. Writing about Wagner's 'saturation' of opera, Lacoue-Labarthe isolates a specific instance of omission by contrasting the 'more subtle (more "French") mode of deconstruction à la Debussy' with the 'redundancy or oversaturation' of Strauss and the 'incompleteness, or "failure" in relation to Wagner of *Lulu* and *Moses und Aron*'.<sup>4</sup> Thus, in reaction to the plenitude of Austro-German composition — its overflowing presence constitutive of a powerful tradition — Debussy's music is characterised by absence: absence of Wagner, motivicism, development (one Adorno's 'discarded opportunities'), and by the strategic silences

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<sup>1</sup> Theodor Adorno, 'Motifs', in *Quasi una fantasia*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (London: Verso, 1992), p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Adorno, *Philosophy of Modern Music*, trans. Anne G. Mitchell and Wesley V. Bloomster (London: Sheed and Ward, 1973), pp. 188-90.

<sup>3</sup> Adorno, *Philosophy of Modern Music*, p. 192.

<sup>4</sup> Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *Musica Ficta (Figures of Wagner)*, trans. Felicia McCarren (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), p. 117.

Debussy claimed to have originated. But Lacoue-Labarthe's 'destructuration' also suggests that absence is an active process — 'absenting', making Wagner absent — and that the *différance* of Debussy's music can be located in this process. This is a significant addition to Adorno: Wagner is acknowledged as partially present, as a 'possible', but the destructuring, deconstructive work is the process through which Debussy puts an increasingly greater distance between 'Wagner' and 'himself',<sup>5</sup> widening this difference and thus deferring more and more indefinitely the capacity of the residue of Wagner's musical language to refer to Wagner: such a combination of difference and deferral exemplifies Derrida's notion of *différance*, and in this case presents the deconstructive process as compositional career.

1.3 Something of this *différance* can be glimpsed in a late, typically cryptic comment on *Pelléas et Mélisande* (1893-1902):

The simplicity of *Pelléas* must be insisted upon. I spent twelve years in removing from it everything of a parasitic nature that might have crept into it. Never did I seek to revolutionize anything whatever.<sup>6</sup>

Debussy simultaneously protests that *Pelléas* is neither new ('revolutionary') nor derivative ('parasitic'), and that it is simple, not complex. The latter is difficult to accept. Debussy seems to insist that the opera just 'is', that it has an autonomous authenticity transcending its place in history, a position Derrida describes as a 'metaphysics of presence' and which Debussy communicates here by the loaded term, 'simple'. Such positions are ripe for deconstruction (they are its element). Respect for Debussy's subtlety, though, suggests that his defence of *Pelléas* is historically coded: the assertion of the opera's autonomy is, in a pre-deconstructive age, a strategy, a form of words focussing attention on the internal dynamic of the work, that is to say, on its originality. 'Originality' is the missing term in Debussy's description ('modesty prevents me from saying .....'), but it is there, as the

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<sup>5</sup> My inverted commas indicate that these categories are not fixed but are complicit: 'Wagner' is a process of becoming within reception; Debussy 'himself' is not an essence but a process of becoming implicated in this reception.

<sup>6</sup> *New York Times*, 5 May 1918. Quoted in David A. Grayson, *The Genesis of Debussy's Pelléas et Mélisande* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1986), p. 231.

median of 'parasitic' and 'revolutionary'. And the 'original', as Debussy knew well, is not a category outside history but is defined by it. What is original, of course, is a new thing; what is new in Debussy is the rejection of the insistent and didactically obvious (as in Debussy's mature reading of Wagner), and of the realistic and emotionally direct (as in the French tradition of Gounod and Massenet), in favour of the undecidable and ambiguous. But as can be inferred from Adorno, such an aporetic reading of Debussy must extend beyond the dramatic or semantic to the fabric of the composition, to the internal relations of its material. Everywhere, there are signs of Wagner (quite literally: the 'Tristan chord' and its resolution appear in *Pelléas* as the harmonic complex formed by pc sets 4-27 and 4-27B)<sup>7</sup> but these signs do not always refer directly to Wagner, nor even to *Tristan*, but to a compositional material and dramatic world that these signs have opened up. Once the 'Tristan' complex is reconceived as a set relation, it becomes structurally mobile; tonal, voiceleading and motivic opportunities are discarded, and the very possibility of a 'Wagnerian', Austro-German style is replaced by voids — non-continuations, unrealised implications, palindromes (everything outside a recursive structure is a void in relation to that structure), and arabesque. The seventh bar of *Pelléas* is an example: a silence, a void, 'resolves' the augmented sixth chord. This highly-implicative tonal chord implies here a resolution to VII (touched on in bar 4) via its dominant, but since it fails to progress all the possibilities it contains are projected into silence where they are held in suspension for future reference (see Ex. 1). Conventional meanings are thus deferred, some infinitely (for example, the instability of this type of chord), while as a consequence of this deferral, a different significance arises: the chord contains four notes of the whole-tone scale (Ab, C, D, F#; the remaining two — Bb, E — follow in the next beat) contrasting with the previous diatonicism. We realise that two fields have been presented, the diatonic and the whole-tone, and that there is a conceptual opposition and not a tonal ('Wagnerian') continuity. This is *différance* in action, the combination in the sign (the augmented 6th chord) of difference and deferral of meaning.

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<sup>7</sup> Here and throughout this study I use Larry Solomon's revision of the standard set names established by Allen Forte. See Larry Solomon, 'The list of chords, their properties and use in analysis', *Interface*, Vol. 11 (1982), pp. 61-107.

1.4 In this way, the deconstructive image of the work first comes into focus when Debussy is viewed in relation to the past. This is a symptom of the deconstructive tendencies within Symbolist poetics (where Debussy can be most productively located), in which the *différance* of poetry and ordinary language ('chatter' in Mallarmé) is installed by means of the classic Derridean operations — dissemination, iterability and semantic undecidability (§6.12-13). Crucially, though, writers like Baudelaire, Mallarmé, Rimbaud, and Wyzewa deconstruct the colloquial and traditional by maintaining tight, even strict, literary form: Debussy, too, maintains a formal control in which the strictures of the sonnet are transferred to music as the normative repetition of short phrases and units so pervasive that it threatens to generate an automatic machine for coherence.<sup>8</sup> Critical analysis of these styles is problematised by this formal conservatism: there is little prominent formal experimentation (unless we pretend to expect Debussy to compose in sonata form), but there is an extreme structural radicalism promulgated within traditional frames which, consequently, are radicalised by the freely-playing linguistic or musical material.

To intuit a parallel of Symbolist poetics and Debussy's music is one thing, to demonstrate it critically is another. It seems to me that the relation extends beyond common aesthetic ideals realised differently in diverse media, and beyond the similar 'tone' of Debussy and Mallarmé (for example). The technical revolution in poetry, begun by Baudelaire and the French appropriation of Poe and brought to maturity by Mallarmé has a claim to be the origin of Debussy's discovery of a non-organicist compositional technique in which devices of unity are, paradoxically, often more overt than in the teleological monuments of 19th-century music. Analytically, Debussy's music appears as the art of paradox and ambiguity, a style that a deconstructive mode of criticism is especially equipped to capture. This mode is also historically appropriate (although it is unfashionable to admit it): Mallarmé, 'the grandfather of deconstruction',<sup>9</sup> and Symbolist

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<sup>8</sup> Mallarmé's *Un coup de dés* and Debussy's *Jeux* are the partial exceptions, and because they are both late works this suggests a parallel late formal radicalism.

<sup>9</sup> Roger Pearson, review of Stéphane Mallarmé, *Collected Poems*, trans. Henry Weinfield, *Times Literary Supplement*, 27 October 1995, p. 26. See also Steven Cassedy, *Flight from Eden: The Origins of Modern Literary Criticism and Theory* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

poetics are acknowledged as an influence on both structuralist and post-structuralist theory, particularly Saussure and Lacan. A historically-informed understanding of Debussy today, therefore, can justifiably take the form of a metatheoretical enquiry, one which reads back into the 'historical' texts the highly-developed theoretical formulations they inspired, and which entails some speculative readings of Symbolist theory to establish the musico-poetic common ground: hence 'metatheory'. A contemporary view of Debussy's music (Debussy 'for today') seems to me to entail the reclamation of the shadowy, hard-to-pin-down Symbolist context, and even though it is impossible to determine definitively, this methodological commitment to Debussy's contextual specificity restrains interpretive freedom. The following chapters extend an oxymoron reflecting Debussy's practice — a disciplined deconstruction designed to loosen autonomous theory and to allow the analytical readings to be informed by the intertextual and interdisciplinary.

## 2: A Second Beginning (Practice and Theory)

2.1 When he came to compose the Prelude to *Pelléas* in December 1893<sup>1</sup> Debussy confronted a decision facing any 19th-century composer of operas: what will stand at the beginning? — an overture, prelude, or the first phase of the action? In the event, he could not dispense with something introductory. Having decided to cut the first scene of Maeterlinck's play which performs the dramatic function of an overture, something had to take its place. But Debussy seemed not to find anything thematically disposable in Maeterlinck: the operatic adaptation would have to encapsulate the excisions that accommodate the music. In this very economical drama, though, it must also present the essential content, the relations of the characters as defined by their themes and harmonic fields. The Prelude is therefore, among other things, 'a masterpiece of compression'<sup>2</sup> that excludes all connective tissue, and (originally, I think) states most of the essential musical themes of the opera in opposition. Certainly the structure is closed, if only by the virtual I-VI-V-I background progression — D (b. 1), Bb (b. 12), A (b. 18), D (b. 21) — but the provisionality of this closure creates modes of continuity that resonate throughout the opera and which now appear postmodern in their decisive break with the structure of repetition and transformation inherited from 19th-century models, predominantly Wagner.

Debussy could hardly have avoided the issue of models. As Carolyn Abbate has argued, Wagner inhabited his compositional consciousness as an insistent, often unwelcome, authoritative voice, so evidently that in *Pelléas* 'Debussy may be considered a Wagner commentator' and 'a more distinctive interpreter of Wagner than the more familiarly post-Wagnerian German composers'.<sup>3</sup> I would go further, to suggest that Debussy's relationship to Wagner is dependent on Wagner as host, not for sustenance but

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<sup>1</sup> See Grayson, *Genesis*, p. 27.

<sup>2</sup> Roger Nichols and Richard Langham Smith, *Claude Debussy: 'Pelléas et Mélisande'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 63.

<sup>3</sup> Carolyn Abbate, 'Tristan in the composition of *Pelléas*', *19th-Century Music*, Vol. 4 (1981), p. 141.



as a supporting presence, which as his compositional maturity develops destroys the host and becomes free-standing. Although Debussy eventually rid his music of surface Wagnerisms (and was therefore able to quote the opening of *Tristan*, with parodic intent, in 'Golliwog's Cake-walk' [1906-07],<sup>4</sup> he also assimilated and remade Wagner's harmonic language. The issue here is to what extent this precursive model may be evident in Debussy. Robin Holloway finds progressions based on the opening of *Tristan* 'detached from their highly charged grammatical connotations [in Wagner] [...], manipulated and positioned according to aural predilection rather than tonal function' so that they form 'a shadowy remnant, behind the superficial linguistic dislocation, of the expressive force of the original's harmonic pull'.<sup>5</sup> The 'Tristan' chord, among others, is 'demythologized': 'the glancing, disembodied usage of certain chords, [...] charged in the original with both grammatical and emotional meaning, have in their new context a complexity of ambiguous reference quite out of proportion to their intrinsic significance or even interest'.<sup>6</sup> Debussy, he implies, loses Wagner's 'expectation of resolution which is then denied' (the grammatical function) and therefore flattens out Wagner's style, so that once meaningful progressions are pointlessly ambiguous: Wagner-1. Holloway's view denies significance to both the Wagnerian and the Debussian in Debussy, since no structure is allowed to emerge from the parasitic reliance on a culturally-persistent vocabulary. Responding to Holloway, Abbate writes that 'many "quotations" may be merely the result of coincidental or vague affinities which arise whenever a common harmonic vocabulary is in use', but the quotation of the 'Tristan' chord in *Pelléas*, Act 4, scene 4, for example, 'has no structural harmonic significance [...] in its context [...] and is] not musical at all. Rather, the composer has allowed a detail in the text to evoke a musical element which has no actual musical function or consequence'.<sup>7</sup> Abbate reads the quotations from, and other

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<sup>4</sup> In September 1907, during the composition of the collection *Children's Corner* which includes 'Golliwog's cake-walk', Debussy discussed with the Symbolist poet Gabriel Mourey the possibility of a music-theatre project based on the *Tristan* legend. In 1908, this was contracted for production at the New York Metropolitan Opera House under the title *La légende de Tristan*. See Edward Lockspeiser, *Debussy: his Life and Mind*, Vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), pp. 295-6.

<sup>5</sup> Robin Holloway, *Debussy and Wagner* (London: Eulenberg, 1979), p. 125.

<sup>6</sup> Holloway, *ibid.*, p. 125.

<sup>7</sup> Abbate, '*Tristan* in *Pelléas*', p. 139.

references to, *Tristan* ('the main subtext' of the opera) as 'manipulated by the composer to become a sort of hidden commentary' on Maeterlinck's *Pelléas*.<sup>8</sup> She has it both ways: Wagnerian references are both accidental and structurally significant within Debussy's *Pelléas*, and intentional but structurally insignificant (in the sense that these references are implicated only in an act of dramatic criticism). Insofar as few doubt that *Pelléas* has a structure beyond *Tristan*, the former at least comes closer to traditional analytical assumptions. But Abbate's seductive assertion of a 'non-musical' autonomy for Wagnerian objects is licentious too: she fails to show how Debussy's putative dramatic critique, using music as a metalanguage (this is why 'Tristan' chords are 'not musical'), coheres into any interpretation of *Tristan* beyond the most obvious parallels of scenario and characterisation. Neither Abbate nor Holloway allow much space for the Bloomian notion that Debussy reworks the Wagnerian 'text', deconstructs it by constructing something new from it, while leaving enough of his source to complicate *Pelléas* and *Tristan* in an intertextual network (§§8.14, 8.15).

2.2 While *Tristan* has been the main focus in identifying the Wagnerism of *Pelléas*,<sup>9</sup> the more immediate structural relation in the Prelude is *Parsifal*.<sup>10</sup> Debussy studied the opera in late 1893 for a series of 'Ten Wagnerian Sessions' begun in February 1894,<sup>11</sup> and later expressed unequivocal admiration for the Act 3 introduction:

In *Parsifal*, the final effort of a genius before whom we should bow our heads, Wagner tried to be less rigidly authoritarian toward the music, to let it breathe a little more freely. [...] Nothing in the music of Wagner is more serenely beautiful than the Prelude to the Third Act of *Parsifal*, and the "Good Friday Spell".<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Abbate, *ibid.*, p. 141.

<sup>9</sup> Catherine Clément writes of the libretto that *Pelléas* is '*Tristan and Isolde* and its underside'. *Opera, or the Undoing of Women*, trans. Betsy Wing (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), p. 111.

<sup>10</sup> The most exhaustive catalogue of correspondences between *Parsifal* and *Pelléas* is found in Holloway, *Debussy and Wagner*, *passim*.

<sup>11</sup> See Grayson, *Genesis*, p. 225.

<sup>12</sup> '*Parsifal* and the Société des Grands Auditions de France', *Gil Blas*, 6 April 1903. Translated in *Debussy on Music*, ed. and trans. Richard Langham Smith (London: Secker and Warburg, 1977), p. 166.

The extract is a strikingly episodic example of what Debussy called the 'Wagnerian formula', 'the application of symphonic form and development to dramatic action, and its use of a system of leitmotives'.<sup>13</sup> To this must be added Debussy's technical manifesto of 1893, which identifies the formulae of Wagner's compositional technique:

Already in Beethoven the art of development consists of incessant repetitions of identical phrases. And Wagner has exaggerated this procedure almost to the point of caricature [...]. I would like to see, and I will succeed myself in producing, music which is entirely free from 'motifs', or rather consisting of one continuous 'motif' which nothing interrupts and which never turns back on itself. Then we shall have a logical development, concise and deductive; there will be no hasty and superfluous 'padding' between two repetitions of the same 'motif' which will be a characteristic and essential part of the work. The development will no longer be a purely material amplification, a rhetorical exercise performed by a well-taught professional, but will have a wider and, indeed, psychic significance.<sup>14</sup>

Debussy was speaking at the time of making the first drafts of *Pelléas* (i.e., Act 4, scene 4, and the Prelude),<sup>15</sup> a period when he also wrote to Chausson:

[2 October 1893]

I was premature in crying 'success!' over *Pelléas et Mélisande*.<sup>16</sup> After a sleepless night (bringer of truth) I had to admit it wouldn't do at all. It was like a duet by M. So-and-so, or nobody in particular, and worst of all the ghost of old Klingsor, alias R. Wagner, kept appearing in the corner of a bar, so I've torn the whole thing up. I've started again and am trying to find a recipe [*une petite chimie*] for producing more personal phrases.<sup>17</sup>

What Debussy said may not be an accurate reflection of what he was doing in the early stages of *Pelléas*, but taken together these richly suggestive statements constitute a

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<sup>13</sup> Grayson, *Genesis*, p. 227.

<sup>14</sup> Reported in André Fontainas, *Mes souvenirs du symbolisme* (Paris, 1928), pp. 92-3. Quoted in Stefan Jarocinski, *Debussy: Impressionism and Symbolism* (London: Eulenburg, 1976), p. 103. The 'psychic significance' of development may be connected with the Bergsonian notion of the continuity of the past (as memory) in the present (§§6.2, 6.3).

<sup>15</sup> See Jarocinski, *Debussy*, p. 103.

<sup>16</sup> Almost certainly Act 4, scene 4. Debussy had written to Chausson on 3 September 1893: 'C. A. Debussy is finishing a scene of *Pelléas et Mélisande*, called "A well in the park" (Act IV, scene 4) on which he would be glad to have the opinion of E. Chausson'. *Debussy Letters*, ed. François Lesure and Roger Nichols, trans. Roger Nichols (London: Faber, 1987), p. 52.

<sup>17</sup> Debussy, *Letters*, p. 54. Translation modified.

provocative aesthetic programme. They describe a style of essentials, not the vague Impressionism of our *idée reçue*; a telescoped intensity more often associated with Viennese atonality, the Debussy of Boulez and Barraqué; and they affirm the value of the repeatable ('two repetitions of the same "motif" [...] will be a characteristic and essential part of the work').

Repetition is problematised here by the Wagnerian aesthetic. The German style of Beethoven and Wagner is heard (pre-Schoenberg as melodic theorist, and pre-Schenker) as a style of superfluity, musically illogical, discontinuous, and replete with unmotivated reprise, of which the most Wagnerian types are *Leitmotiv* (Debussy's 'motifs') and sequence. (Whittall highlights this feature in Wagner's introduction: 'coherence [...] is reinforced through repetition, sequence, the continued treatment of motivic elements, most of them already familiar'.)<sup>18</sup> But what is the functional difference between sequence and repetition in Wagner, and why is repetition in Debussy not a similar 'rhetorical exercise'? Furthermore, Debussy's conception of 'motif' seems to escape definition in his text: the assertion of an unbroken continuity, simultaneously with the primacy of repetition (as opposed to the Germanic technique of development) is equivocal;<sup>19</sup> and the 'recipe' metaphor (*petite chimie*) implies scientific law, the mechanistic, and (primarily) the repeatable. If Wagnerian development (by which Debussy seems to mean 'continuity') is to be criticised for its 'incessant' repetitions, what are we to make of Debussy's 'essential' repetitions in this text and in practice? His descent into apparent self-contradiction reveals, I think, the profundity of the compositional issue he was beginning to grapple with. Perhaps repetition is to serve continuity as long as it is not sequential, thus producing static, non-developmental units and defining a style that affirms discontinuity as a structural mode? From this point it seems that Debussy must be understood hierarchically: repetition is a surface feature, essential but subordinated to a higher-level continuity of 'motif' that obviates the need for 'superfluous padding', and is represented on

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<sup>18</sup> Arnold Whittall, 'The music', in Lucy Beckett, *Richard Wagner: Parsifal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 79.

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, Vladimir Jankélévitch, *Debussy et le mystère de l'instant* (Paris: Plon, 1976), pp. 136-42.

the surface by arabesque ('one continuous motif that nothing interrupts'). Arguing from our understanding of Debussy's (later) practice, the basis of his Wagner critique is that Wagner's repetition serves a higher-level continuity, the logic of tonal progression that Debussy habitually subverts. Debussy listens 'through' Wagner's surface linearity (*unendliche Melodie*) to the repetition structures that control it. Debussy's own surface is to be freely discontinuous, controlled not by formulae but by a more profound, though minimal, linearity (§8.20).

This reversal of the functions of repetition and linearity, of discontinuity and 'development', is the problematic of *fin-de-siècle* music. The function of repetition has a claim to be the origin of the modernist crisis which gathers force through the first half of the 20th century until it is decisively solved in the second (post-1945) phase of modernism, both by the abnegation of choice and by the exercise of rigid compositional will: repetition, or at least intentional repetition, is rejected in both integral serialism and aleatoricism. Debussy rises to a more difficult (though less dramatic) aesthetic challenge: quite obviously, the will to an intentional structure is preserved, but this must be reconceived as 'natural' rather than inevitable (as logic), evolutionary rather than teleological, 'French' rather than 'German' (even Rameau, the Cartesian rationalist, appeals to 'nature' to support logical, and therefore artificial, structural relations).

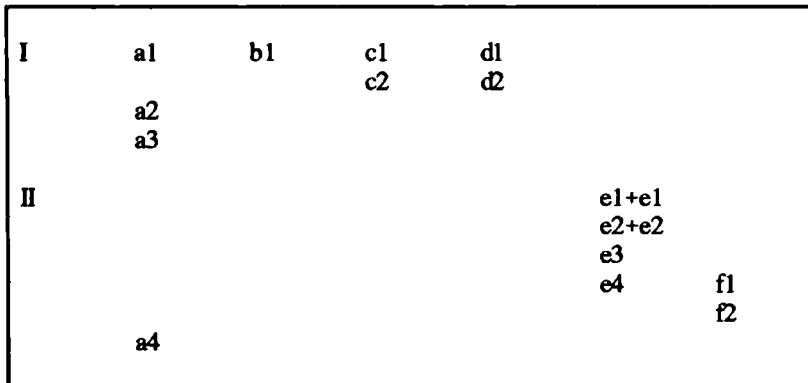
**2.3** Comparison of two examples, a paradigmatic presentation of the introduction to Act 3 of *Parsifal*, and Ruwet's similar analysis of Debussy's Prelude (with Nattiez's revisions)<sup>20</sup> (Exs 2 and 3) shows that the immediate similarities are more striking than the differences. Wagner's opening gambit, the presentation of four distinct ideas (units *a-d*) defining a continuous development, quickly resolves into a repetition structure (*c2-d2*) and closes its first phase with a double repetition of the initial unit (*a2, a3*). Thereafter, a second phase is predicated on a repetition of identical units (*e1+e1*) and transposition or rhythmic diminution (*e2-e4*), with *f1+f2* as a further development by free inversion. The

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<sup>20</sup> Nicholas Ruwet, 'Note sur les duplications dans l'oeuvre de Debussy', in *Langage, musique, poésie* (Paris: Seuil, 1972), p. 91; and Jean-Jacques Nattiez, *Fondements d'une sémiologie de la musique* (Paris: Union générale d'éditions, 1975), p. 252. Figs 2.1 and 2.2 are abstracted from these sources. Ex. 3 is reproduced again in Ex. 11 below.

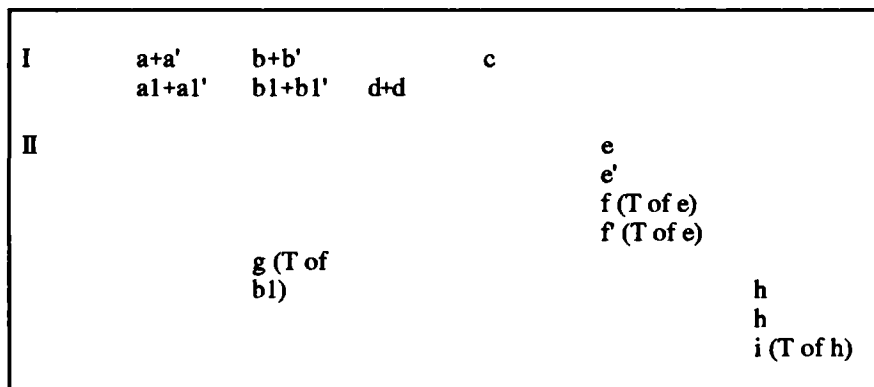
first large section ends with a development of *a1*. Thus, the following schematic structure emerges:

Fig. 2.1: Wagner, *Parsifal*, introduction to Act 3, bars 1-18.



Debussy's Prelude is similarly divided into two large sections (bars 1-15, 16-23) and shows a similar structure, without the developmental opening:

Fig. 2.2: Debussy, *Pelléas et Mélisande*, Prelude.



Wagner's developmental opening is not as oppositional as it may first appear: *a1* and *b1* are rhythmically similar to *c1* and *d1* and in pitch ambit (triadic leaps in *a* and *c* are followed by restricted, mainly descending scalar material in *b* and *d* (chromatic). Thus, the opening could be re-described as in Fig. 2.3:

Fig. 2.3

a1+b1	
a2+b2	(= c1+d1)
a3+b3	(= c2+d2)
(a4+	
a5)	(= a2+a3)

Bringing all the units into one paradigm in this way reveals how much Wagner depends on transformation as opposed to the near-exact repetition of Debussy. Referring to 'similarities' between these extracts, Nichols notes that Wagner's comments on the introduction to Act 3 also apply to Debussy's Prelude: 'My preludes must consist of the elements, and not be dramatic [...] or the drama becomes superfluous'.<sup>21</sup> While the Prelude contains most of the musical 'elements' of the opera and therefore embodies the Wagnerian principle, their relations are effected by the new technique of non-developmental opposition (as, for example, in the opposition of diatonic and whole-tone in bars 1-7). But, importantly, both pieces show the same cadential move, a doubling of the unit that stands at the boundary of the two large sections ( $a2+a3$  in Wagner,  $d+d$  in Debussy), and they usher in a developmental section that in both cases depend on sequential development (Wagner, bars 12-18; Debussy, bars 16-23). Wagner's second section, like Debussy's, is based on one idea with a return to the opening material to signal the cadence. Compare the two:

Fig. 2.4

Wagner

Debussy (Nattiez version): all units 1 bar

II	e1+e1	(2x1 bar)		II	e		
	e2+e2	(2x1 bar)			e		
	e3	(0.5 bar)			f (T of e)		
	e4	(0.5 bar)	f1 (0.5 bar)		f (T of e)		
			f2 (0.5 bar)	g (T of b1)		h	
	a4 (1 bar)					h	
						i (T of h)	

<sup>21</sup> Quoted in Nichols and Langham Smith, *Pelléas*, p. 63.

Despite the differences, the overall strategy is the same in both: four bars of sequential repetition followed by transformation (Wagner *e3-f2*, Debussy *h-i*). Debussy signals the cadence early by unit *g* (*T of b1*) which returns to the opening material: but thereafter the new material indicated by Ruwet and Nattiez is problematically multivalent for structuralist analyses such as these. That is, *h*, *h*, *i* can be identified both with the *eff* paradigm (as a simplification of the interval progression, especially the falling minor third that begins all these units) and paradigm *A* (because of the emphasis on the second beat of the bar, a feature that migrates to paradigm *B* (discussed below)).

Is this a case of explicit modelling? I think not, at least in the large scale. Although the melodic content of the units in each piece is similar, harmonically they are dissimilar, and that is to say that their modes of relation are different. Broadly speaking, Wagner's units are harmonically processive while Debussy's are static. Compare the first two units of each piece: Wagner's bass, though complex, seems to refer to a progression from an implied tonic to the dominant via an arpeggiation of Gb (VI). Debussy, on the other hand, repeats the move from D to C which in the event has no local resolution (the Ab of unit *b* is at least as disruptive as it is potentially processive, as a whole-tone scale descent). Furthermore, as the Wagner progresses the relationship of units is by harmonic sequence (G natural-Ab-A natural-Bb in the bass, units *c2-f4*). Debussy's developmental section, however, takes place over a slow-moving bass Bb-A (bars 14-19), and the relation of units defined by the shift (i.e., *d-e'*, and *f-f'*) are not *sequentially* related (the transposition levels of the bass and top line are different). The contrast between Wagner and Debussy here is a contrast between what Debussy calls 'symphonic composition' and 'arabesque',<sup>22</sup> a non-developmental type of elaboration that is not structurally dispensable (it is not merely ornamental).

In the first section of the Wagner, the harmonic progression transgresses the unit-boundaries defined by melodic repetition and Wagner's phrasing. See, for example, *d1-d2* which (harmonically?) prolong the F# in order to transform it from #V (F# major) to

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<sup>22</sup> See Françoise Gervais, 'La notion d'arabesque chez Debussy', *Revue musicale*, No. 214 (1958), pp. 1-23.



V<sup>6</sup>/natural VI (G major) in *d2*. Although *c1* and *c2* are related by melodic sequence (in both the top line and the bass), the harmonic functions of each unit are different (*c1* prolongs the preceding F natural, but by stepwise progression, not transforming its function). This change of harmonic function underneath a melodic sequential unit-pair keeps the music suspended despite the schematic, periodic melodic formations. By contrast, and rather surprisingly, Debussy's opening section is much *more* schematic than Wagner's. Although melodic units may be reharmonised, the harmonic functions do not cross the unit-boundaries: they are only weakly implicative because of the doubling of each unit which increases their independent oppositional status. Here, then, we can observe correspondences between Debussy's 'theory' (as presented in the quotations above) and his practice:

a) there is no sequential development; this is replaced by 'arabesque';

b) Debussy's use of immediate and minimally transformed repetition (*a* and *a'*, *a1* and *a1'*, for example) is radically unlike anything in the Wagner example, in which there is no exact repetition other than sequence;

c) Debussy's use of transposition is not sequential (compare *b+b'*, *b1+b1'*, *e+e'*, *f+f'*). Thus while each unit is (un-Wagnerianly) self-contained, the bass and top voice are essentially separate, and define strata: this is the counterpart to Wagner's change of harmonic function within melodic sequence.

In the second section, Wagner's units are in a sense indistinguishable because of the powerful sequential harmonic scheme reinforced by diminution (*e1-f2*). From unit *e1* the melodic and harmonic material in the sequence is integral, so that the process appears to be automatic. This is an example of Debussy's 'incessant repetition of identical phrases', with the proviso that each is transposed up a semitone. What isolates this as Wagnerian and leads Debussy to eliminate it from his compositional vocabulary is the systematic, automatic nature of the procedure: not only is the Wagner passage sequential, but it is also teleological (the drive from the G natural to Bb, which then falls back systematically Ab-F, G natural-E natural). Melody and harmony are unified, not separable or stratified as in Debussy, and therefore do not create different and complementary parametrical structures.

The diminution of harmonic rhythm is also schematically proportional (4:1). All these features are rejected in Debussy's *Prelude* since they too easily resolve into 'superfluous padding' and become 'rhetorical exercises', in which he must have included the domination of melodic structure by tonal systems (as in Wagner). Debussy inverts this relationship so that the melodic suppleness of arabesque floats free of tonal and harmonic schemata.

2.4 It should not be forgotten that Debussy found much to admire in Wagner's introduction, especially, perhaps, the suspension of tonality. On the evidence of the compositional technique in *Pelléas* — that is, on the evidence of how much of the 'ghost of old Klingsor' Debussy did not eliminate — what he appropriated was the relative independence of harmonic and melodic formations that contributed to the indeterminate, non-formulaic tonality of the opening. To go further, a case can be made for the *Prelude* as a re-composition of Wagner's opening (bars 1-11), without suggesting that this is a model. It might be parody (in the old sense); but whatever the intention, we are dealing with an intertext, and with intertextuality in general.

Although Debussy tropes only the first ten bars of Wagner's introduction, the *Prelude* vivifies commentary to create an almost classic intertext<sup>23</sup> in which a segment of the precursor text is elaborated into a complete piece. Debussy's commentary on Wagner is replete with differing and deferred operations: the presence of Wagner is this *différance*, in Harold Bloom's terms, a *kenosis* in which Debussy, like Bloom's 'poet', 'moves towards discontinuity with the precursor, but this movement inevitably produces discontinuity with his own text';<sup>24</sup> which is also to say that it has intratextual as well as intertextual consequences. It might be objected that such relations could be asserted between any two texts since discontinuity usually (perhaps always) features on some level or other of the intertext. In this case, though, the theoretical category, *kenosis*, fits like a glove: Debussy's 'style' in the *Prelude* is oppositional, discontinuous, produced, as I have indicated above,

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<sup>23</sup> 'The text in which other texts reside or echo their presence'. Hawthorn, *Glossary*, p. 85.

<sup>24</sup> Kevin Korsyn, 'Towards a new poetics of musical influence', *Music Analysis*, Vol. 10 (1991), p. 47.

by the exclusion of transitions, those distinctively Wagnerian, *musikalische-Prosa* features. The nature of Debussy's interpretation of Wagner is to suppress *unendliche Melodie*, the Wagnerian sign of signs. Such a suppression is a distinctive feature of *kenosis* which Bloom describes as a reductive trope allied to metonymy: this is powerfully instantiated in the *Prélude*'s oppositional structures which present particularly sharp Bloomian 'images of reduction'<sup>25</sup> — in this case, a reduction of Wagnerian superfluity.

In order to unearth the relationship of the *Prelude* to Wagner's introduction I use Barthes's *lexia*, 'a minimal unit of reading'<sup>26</sup> whose effect can be isolated, defined and distinguished from the effect of other passages. This may seem somewhat clumsy (who, exactly, is reading?), but my reading of Debussy's reading rests on the assumption that the *lexia* identified also have a plausible Debussian pertinence: Debussy's reading of Wagner can only be reconstructed. Four *lexia* are listed in Ex. 4 where they resemble Schoenbergian *Grundgestalten*. Detached from their Wagnerian functions in Debussy's adaptation, they become Barthesian 'indices'.<sup>27</sup> Motive, the functional category of melody (as 'narrative'), is transferred as melodic shape only, separated from its harmonic and generative functions, while harmonic and tonal progressions, the functions of tonality, are reciprocally divorced from their motivic contexts.

*Lexia 1a-c* (Ex. 4) in Wagner contain most of the structural ideas of the *Prélude*. The 5th, 4th and tritone of Wagner's opening motive define respectively the 5th of the Destiny theme, the interval relation of this and the Golaud motive (4th), and the tritone relation of the bass and top voice (Ab-D, b. 5). Thus Debussy retains Wagner's opposition of 5th and tritone, together with its mode of connection, the 4th. Debussy's transformation of these constituents extends the 5th to create a single unit (the Destiny theme), and conserves the tritone as the definition of the harmonic space of the Golaud theme. Wagner's single unit (bars 1-2) expands in the *Prelude* to become two, opposed

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<sup>25</sup> Quoted in Korsyn, *ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>26</sup> Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1974), pp. 13-14.

<sup>27</sup> The terms 'function' and 'index' originate in Roland Barthes, 'Introduction to the structural analysis of narrative', in *Image-Music-Text*, ed. and trans. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana, 1977), pp. 79-124. Functions are narrative units connected in a structural sequence, indices are less structured, and less 'active' narrative units. See also Jeremy Hawthorn, *A Concise Glossary of Contemporary Literary Theory* (London: Edward Arnold, 1992), p. 73.

units. Debussy's reading of these two bars, Bb-F-E natural-F (see lexia 1a), grounds the Destiny theme, replacing Wagner's chromatic lower neighbour E natural with its diatonic form. This linear, voiceleading motive in Wagner — F (the 7th over VI) 'resolves' to E natural forming a diminished triad with the bass G-natural; as an illusory resolution to an embellishing chord, this must itself resolve and does so by moving back to F natural (I<sup>6</sup> on Db) — is read by Debussy as a melodic, not harmonic, motion. Wagner controls the 5th/tritone (chromatic/diatonic) opposition contrapuntally: in lexia 4 the bass is both a strict inversion of the interval pairing (5th, tritone) of lexia 1b and an inversion of the motive <sup>of</sup> lexia 1a, with a prolongation of the G natural neighbour note. This, too, is a voiceleading motive, and although the control of the Db (I<sup>6</sup>, b. 2) by the G natural may seem eccentric, it has a claim to priority such that it supports the diminished triad, the most insistent sonority in the piece.<sup>28</sup> Debussy conflates this inversional shadowing of the Destiny theme, the inversional relationship of a whole-tone progression to the tritone in the bass and middle voice (Wagner Bb-E natural, Debussy D-Ab) shown in lexia 4 (Ex. 4). In both pieces this bass progression depends on lexia 3, the functional transformations and prolongation of VI (Wagner Gb/F#, Debussy Bb). Whereas Wagner effects this through enharmonic/modulatory transformation (VI becomes #V becomes V/#VI), Debussy first establishes VI with the added 6th then treats it as a pedal, although beneath these complex transformations the chord can be heard to function as VI: the natural 4 (b. 14) functions as a neighbour note to the 5th (b. 16), while the b9 and (b)4 (b. 16) resolve by step to triadic consonances (b. 18). That these progressions are harmonically non-functional (in the strict sense) originates in the non-functional indispensability of arabesque (§2.3).

The registral disposition of the bass gives rise to lexia 4: pitches in the lower register define the descending progression to the tritone and beyond, while upper-register pitches define the inversion of this progression, toward the upper tritone. E natural is established as a goal by the return of F# (= Gb) which then continues to D natural,

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<sup>28</sup> Robert Morgan asserts G natural as supporting the first statement of the dissonant tonic sonority of the introduction. See 'Dissonant prolongations: theoretical and compositional precedents', *Journal of Music Theory*, Vol. 10 (1976), p. 63, Ex. 7.

completing a putative whole-tone progression to natural  $\wedge^3$ . This linearity essentially connects triadic formations emphasised by duration and other features of articulation, while downplaying their (always tentative) resolutions. Debussy's progression adapts Wagner's interrupted continuation so that it constitutes a new beginning (b. 8), while the tritone divider, interruption and continuation from VI are retained in the *Prélude*, but as the formal design for the complete piece: VI resolves to V in Debussy, whereas in Wagner the larger design necessitates a more complex continuation from VI/#V.

2.5 Beyond the mapping of Wagner's introduction and the *Prelude*, though, there is a difference of dramatic context. Wagner's introduction is only half introductory, since, as an independent piece within the larger continuity of the opera (an example of what Bergson called the 'progressive continuity' presented in 'discontinuous stages'),<sup>29</sup> it refers backwards and forwards quite explicitly, recapitulating familiar *Leitworte* and introducing the new features developed in Act 3.<sup>30</sup> Debussy's *Prelude*, on the other hand, is — almost — an unequivocal beginning. The 5ths of the Destiny theme (the 'unseen player', in Susan Youens's phrase),<sup>31</sup> representing origins and the stuff from which the music evolves, are more prominent here than in Wagner, and the order in which the character-themes is presented foreshadows the order of their appearance in Act 1, scene 1: Destiny, Golaud, Mélisande.<sup>32</sup> The *Prélude*'s dual function is therefore to introduce both the opera and, specifically, the first scene, in which only Destiny, Golaud and Mélisande are present. Furthermore, in its most Wagnerian moment, the combination of the arabesque of Mélisande's theme (sometimes called 'Mélisande's hair' theme) with Golaud's (bars 18-19) is a significant adumbration of one of the crucial tensions of the drama, the brooding presence of Golaud behind any expression of Mélisande's sensuality (of which her hair is the visual and musical symbol).

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<sup>29</sup> Henri Bergson, *Mélanges*, ed. André Robinet (Paris: PUF, 1972), p. 819.

<sup>30</sup> See Carolyn Abbate, 'Parsifal': words and music', in Nicholas John (ed.), *Parsifal: Richard Wagner* (London: Calder 1986), p. 57.

<sup>31</sup> Susan Youens, 'An unseen player: destiny in *Pelléas et Mélisande*', in Arthur Groos and Roger Parker (eds), *Reading Opera* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), pp. 60-91.

<sup>32</sup> Pelléas's theme is literally absent, although it is easily discerned (§5.3).

What is striking in both Wagner and Debussy is the embedded opposition of the tritone within progressions defined horizontally and vertically by 5ths (see lexia 1 and Ex. 5), and the problem solved differently by each composer: how to state and incorporate the *Leitmotiv* into an 'autonomous' and 'symphonic' discourse. Wagner's themes in sections A and B of this first section are opposed: the first is a tissue of quotations associated with, in order, the Flowermaidens, Kundry/sorrow, and the prophecy/yearning motive, all prominent in Act 2 (see Ex. 2). The opening two bars are *Leitmotiv*-independent, but oppose two recurrent ideas, the tonic-dominant 5th (b. 1) which is an inversion of the dominant-tonic anacrusis present in many *Leitmotiv*, and the Bb-E natural vital later in Gurnemanz's questioning of Parsifal.<sup>33</sup> As a motive, bars 1-2 contain the fundamental symbolic opposition of diatonic/purity and chromatic/sensuality so often noted as informing the pitch structure of the opera. Debussy's purpose is rather different: in contrast to Wagner's intra-unit oppositions, the seamless web of musical prose is rejected in favour of inter-unit oppositional statement. Unit relations must therefore be created anew, and this produces a crisis in continuity, which, in turn, destabilises and radicalises concepts of musical structure.

### *Structure*

2.6 Interpretation of a piece like the Prelude that both presents and absents Wagner is always in danger of either consigning the historicity of Debussy's style to a half-world of 'either/or' or straining for the overflowing presence of 'both/and'. Deconstruction — which is not 'an extremism, although it can look just like one when it is viewed from the vantage point of a mode of thought which always wants pure and clear concepts'<sup>34</sup> — provides a radical middle way. It is also a method that offers systematic procedures predicated on the notion of ambiguity, as Barbara Johnson explains:

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<sup>33</sup> Compare *Pelléas*, Act 3, scene 2, when the climax of Golaud's questioning of Pelléas also pivots on the tritone G-Db (Fig. 29, bars 4-5). Debussy, *Pelléas et Mélisande*, orchestral score (Paris: Durand, n.d.), p. 191.

<sup>34</sup> Geoffrey Bennington, *Derridabase*, in Jacques Derrida and Geoffrey Bennington, *Jacques Derrida* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 171.

instead of a simple 'either/or' structure, deconstruction attempts to elaborate a discourse that says *neither* 'either/or', *nor* 'both/and' nor even 'neither/nor', while at the same time not totally abandoning these logics either. The very word *deconstruction* is meant to undermine the either/or logic of the opposition 'construction/deconstruction'.<sup>35</sup>

Analytical approaches insisting on Debussy's radical modernism,<sup>36</sup> his assimilability into tradition<sup>37</sup> or the coexistence of competing modes of structure<sup>38</sup> are not completely inappropriate, but they resolve deconstructive issue by 'placing' him in one historical frame or the other. Even when the 'transitional' status of Debussy is affirmed, the issue (if not the style) is settled with the construction of a 'both/and' category: as Jonathan Dunsby has noted, there is 'the comfort of seeing some music as especially in transition, as if music were not always so'.<sup>39</sup> 'Transition', though, at least admits more than one perspective, structure or process to be true, and to this extent does not insist that Debussy is simply a 'constructive' composer: 'transition' leaves room for the deconstructive image.<sup>40</sup> The problem is that this image of any text comes into focus mediated by theory, so that the heart of this problem lies in the attempt to use the deconstructive idea in analysis itself. Ideally, the result of deconstruction will open up the 'differential [*sic*] tension of the middle',<sup>41</sup> an unresolving *mediation* of the opposition of closed systems on the one hand, and indiscriminating pluralism on the other.

**2.7** The idealised form of analysis in which all factors are kept in play is difficult to realise in practice. Importantly, as Derrida reminds us, the critical impulse must go

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<sup>35</sup> Barbara Johnson, *A World of Difference* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), p. 12.

<sup>36</sup> See Neela Delia Kinariwala, 'Debussy and Musical Coherence: A Study of Succession and Continuity in the Preludes' (PhD diss., University of Texas at Austin, 1987).

<sup>37</sup> See Felix Salzer, *Structural Hearing* (New York: Dover, 1952).

<sup>38</sup> See Richard E. Parks, *The Music of Claude Debussy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

<sup>39</sup> Jonathan Dunsby, 'The poetry of Debussy's *En blanc et noir*', in Craig Ayrey and Mark Everist (eds), *Analytical Strategies and Musical Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 149.

<sup>40</sup> Adorno situates Debussy between Wagner and Stravinsky as the composer of music in which 'the individual color complexes were still related to each other and mediated as in the tradition of Wagner's "art of transition": sound is not devaluated but soars for the moment beyond its boundaries. A perspective of sensory infinity is attained by means of such confluence'. *Philosophy of Modern Music*, p. 192.

<sup>41</sup> Bennington, *Derridabase*, p. 171. 'Differential' is Bennington's adjective formed from *différance*.

beyond interrogation: 'I think that deconstruction is affirmative rather than questioning; this affirmation goes *through* some radical questioning, but is not questioning in the final analysis'.<sup>42</sup> The few published applications of the post-structuralist methods of, for example, Barthes, Derrida and de Man have achieved the deconstruction of the 'dogmatic allegories' of analytical writing,<sup>43</sup> but there is a sense in which this avoids the pressing analytical issues at stake: consequently, the musical work (insofar as that can be said to exist independently of its reflection in analytical discourse) is marginalised. If plurality is to be asserted *within* a work, as ambiguity, our descriptions of musical structure will need modification. In Derrida 'structure' is a concept that can be more accurately redefined as 'structurality', the intellectual construction of structure:

Structure — or rather the structurality of structure — although it has always been at work, has always been neutralized or reduced, and this by a process of giving it a center or of referring it to a point of presence, a fixed origin. The function of this center was not only to orient, balance and organise the structure — one cannot in fact conceive of an unorganised structure — but above all to make sure that the organising principle of the structure would limit what we might call the *play* of the structure.<sup>44</sup>

This concept of structure corresponds to what we know as 'pure' structure in the positivist sense. At the point when the structurality of structure is radically questioned ('when the structurality of structure had to be thought'),<sup>45</sup> the centre is undermined to the extent that structure must be reconceived as discourse:

This was the moment when language invaded the universal problematic, the moment when, in the absence of center or origin, everything became discourse — provided we can agree on this word — that is to say, a system in which the central signified, the original or transcendental signified, is never absolutely present outside a system of differences.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Quoted in Imre Saluzinsky, *Criticism in Society* (London: Methuen, 1987), p. 20.

<sup>43</sup> See, for example, Alan Street, 'Superior myths, dogmatic allegories: the resistance to musical unity', *Music Analysis*, Vol. 8, Nos 1-2 (1989), pp. 77-124.

<sup>44</sup> Jacques Derrida, 'Structure, sign, and play in the human sciences', in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 278.

<sup>45</sup> Derrida, 'Structure', p. 280.

<sup>46</sup> Derrida, *ibid.*, p. 280.



Discourse, as the recognition of the world as a system of differences erasing the centre (origin, central signified), entails the awareness of the substitutions and displacements (respectively, metaphor and metonymy) of one centre for another:

Successively, and in a regulated fashion, the center receives different forms or names. The history of metaphysics, like the history of the West, is the history of these metaphors and metonymies.<sup>47</sup>

In the human sciences the shift from structure to discourse essentially describes a lack of intellectual communality and a (democratic) unwillingness to accept the authority of an informing principle in the structures of thought (the 'centre', or, as Derrida names it elsewhere, the 'transcendental signified'). An intellectual structure — for example, a philosophy with God as its centre — is undone and becomes discourse when this centre is questioned, bracketed or put in parentheses, or reduced — God/'God'/god — and eventually replaced with another, preferred concept. This latter can be understood to be related figuratively to the original concept: for example, god/Man, a metonymy (the creation stands for the creator); or god/Nature, a metaphor, since both concepts are related by a common property ('the creative principle'). This exemplifies the first stage in the 'rupture' in the history of structurality with which Derrida is concerned, the stage when structure is undermined and made mobile by substitutions for the centre. Such substitutions proceed by figural similarity, but at the same time they install difference and inaugurate a system of differences (the transition from god to Man as centre in effect splits the centre into the opposition 'god/Man', so that whichever term is deemed central it relies on the other for its definition). In this sense the centre is 'absent': a split centre confers centrality on neither term. Thus 'language [invades] the universal problematic'; that is to say, a culture becomes self-aware, recognising that the structures of thought are linguistically-driven and that the sense the language makes of the world is primarily a sense in language, not one of objects or objective entities. In other words, it is recognised that signifieds are contingent upon relations of signifiers and that theory is a linguistic act, a text, which attempts to convince or persuade — that is, a discourse.

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<sup>47</sup> Derrida, *ibid.*, p. 278.

If, by analogy with this transformation in the human sciences, 'structure' is replaced by 'discourse' as the essential musical fact, then the latter will have to be understood not only as (in Nattiez's *Music and Discourse*) the sum of music's descriptions and interpretations<sup>48</sup> but also as inscribed within music itself. Reduplicating Derrida's elucidation of the 'structurality of structure', the language analogies of structuralism can be retained (they cannot be ignored), but with a difference: they must go beyond the linguistic to the metalinguistic, from the structure of language to the structure of discourse.<sup>49</sup> My assumption here is that music does not escape Derrida's 'universal problematic', and that the move from structure to structurality also takes place in the music of Debussy. This assumption gives rise to a cultural trope, 'music as discourse', a sustained analogy in which Derrida's observation of 'the play of the structure' in the absence of a centre is projected as an analytical hypothesis. I am not suggesting that this appropriation of Derrida provides a model of structure, but that there is a correspondence of intellectual and compositional thought which allows Debussy's music to be understood as deconstructive because it is discursive. Implicated in a discourse with other music, Debussy's music is 'about' Wagner, for example; consequently, it is a discourse about musical structure (especially tonal structure) that rejects the totalising function of tonality in favour of structural play with, and about, tonicity; and finally, it is a discourse 'with itself', a 'structure' that holds together its elements as discursive units rather than as hierarchically related to, or generated by, an informing principle.

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<sup>48</sup> See Jean-Jacques Nattiez, *Music and Discourse: Toward a Semiology of Music* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. ix. Nattiez's and Hirbour-Paquette's study of the Prelude to *Pelléas* also falls into this category. See Jean-Jacques Nattiez and Louise Hirbour-Paquette, 'Analyse musicale et sémiologie: à propos du Prélude de *Pelléas*', *Musique en jeu*, No. 10 (1973), pp. 42-69.

<sup>49</sup> My understanding of discourse in this context is not that of the linguistic 'proofs' in rhetorical argument. Jankélévitch rejects this model for a similar reason, the 'literary myth' of development associated with 'Germanic' concepts of musical structure (and which we now identify as 'Schoenbergian'): 'Theme A and theme B, the recapitulation, and in general the discursive "Durchführung" of Germanic conservatories did not interest Debussy. Roberval asked *à propos* tragedy: what does it prove? Debussy and Mussorgsky would have thought this geometrical interrogation ridiculous. [...] Deceived by the habits of rhetoric the musician sometimes represents the temporality of a fugue or sonata by analogy with rational discourse. A theme is not the premise of a logical deduction, nor a theorem from which its consequents proceed, except metaphorically or as a manner of speaking. Furthermore, a musical 'thought' (can one speak of 'thought'?) does not progress'. Jankélévitch, *Debussy*, pp. 136-7.

Derrida's siting of discourse and structuralism in the same location, as equivalent, sits oddly in relation to music theory in which structuralist procedures are neutral, taxonomic and corrigible, while musical discourse is subjective, mobile and ambiguous. Derrida's equivalence is therefore split into opposed fields in music theory. While he can analyse the illusory unity of signifier and signified in Lévi-Strauss,<sup>50</sup> structuralist music theory tends to ignore the signified altogether, the dimension that is recaptured for music only as 'discourse' *about* music<sup>51</sup> and in which the liberating arbitrariness of the musical signifier seems to demand that signifieds ground the structure, and in effect maintain a central, totalising function. But Derrida emphasises that 'play' is an essential element *within* structure, a play of signifiers that supplements 'a lack on the part of the signified'.<sup>52</sup> This is to say that the search for totality (in Lévi-Strauss, a 'total mythological pattern') that will explain or control a structure is shown to be 'limited', to be lacking, by the variety of potential relationships that escape such control: 'instead of being an inexhaustible field, [...] instead of being too large, there is something missing from it: a center which arrests and grounds the play of substitutions'.<sup>53</sup> Although Derrida's target is cultural theory and its epistemological structures, similar moves can be observed in musical composition, where what we think of traditionally as the establishment of a new style (new musical structures) involves, minimally, a re-orientation of the 'centre' or, maximally, the erasure of traditional centres in which various 'signs' (local organisational referents) are called up to substitute *for* the centre.

### *On two chords*

2.8 For example, take the first four bars of the Prelude to *Pelléas et Mélisande* (Ex. 1). Louis Laloy's short article on these bars fails to establish a centre univocally, and substitutes first topoi (extrinsic signs) then theoretical signs to deal with forbidden parallel

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<sup>50</sup> Derrida, 'Structure', pp. 280-2.

<sup>51</sup> See, for example, Carolyn Abbate, *Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), and Nattiez, *Music and Discourse*, passim.

<sup>52</sup> Derrida, 'Structure', p. 289.

<sup>53</sup> Derrida, *ibid.*, p. 289.

fifths and non-traditional harmonic progression.<sup>54</sup> That Laloy accurately reflects Debussy's de-centering of the structure demonstrates that theory (especially, perhaps, non-dogmatic theory) provides the image of the deconstructive in music by revealing the features which escape coherent definition, mainly by tracking the play of substitutions inscribed by the composer. The opening bars of the opera are 'like a door that opens onto the foyer of a sanctuary': the initial fifth (D-A) is both 'the most natural [interval] to which the human voice is accustomed', exemplified in Gregorian chant, popular song and in Classical Greek (where the interval of the fifth 'is recognised [...] between the accented syllable and the others');<sup>55</sup> and the bass C (bars 2, 4) determines the Dorian mode, 'the first mode of plainchant, the most solemn of the eight principal modes':

It is [...] not without reason that this short phrase suggests solemn thoughts. Unwittingly, we recognise echoes sustained for centuries beneath cathedral vaults and which invite us to resignation, obedience and to pardon. In order to discover this effect, the composer did not require prolonged calculation; he did not examine the expressive weight [*valeur*] of the chords, the meaning of accidentals, consult ancient graduals or meditate on the mystical value of the various modes. It was sufficient for him to make an introspective journey [*faire un retour sur soi-même*]: with the soul of the ancestors, the memory of their chants is revived.<sup>56</sup>

Laloy has read Rameau (the natural primacy of the fifth) and Rousseau (the appeal to ancient Greek as a natural language and thus as the natural origin of music). The technical and grammatical oddities of the musical passage are validated by the 'return' to ancient modes and to the natural aspects of 'popular song of an ancient type',<sup>57</sup> so that the signs of antiquity and the universal (opposed to the modern and enculturated) substitute for tonality, the centre made absent by the play of unconventional, non-tonal features. And of course the composer is not allowed the luxury of thinking: he must compose from instinct, from collective memory, 'the soul of the ancestors'; he must not 'calculate' or contrive any of these 'effects'. Natural signs are produced by natural, un-reflective

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<sup>54</sup> Louis Laloy, 'Sur deux accords (Novembre 1902)', in Louis Laloy, *La musique retrouvée* (Paris: Plon, 1928), pp. 115-18.

<sup>55</sup> Laloy, *ibid.*, p. 115.

<sup>56</sup> Laloy, *ibid.*, p. 118.

<sup>57</sup> Laloy, *ibid.*, p. 115.

activity. This, now, is quaintly metaphysical, but it is also true: taking Derrida seriously does not entail that sign-substitutions are somehow false.

Laloy, however, is not entirely convinced by his own argument. The analysis of bars 1-4, framed by these appeals to nature as I have presented them, strives to show that Debussy's innovations are, after all, logical and precisely calculated:

This four-note phrase [bars 1-2], which is repeated with a more marked rhythm in the two following bars [bars 3-4], rests on two chords, the first of which, constructed on D and lacking a third, can be heard as either major or minor, until the second one which is actually [*nettement*] a minor chord. The uncertainty is dissipated as soon as we realise that the first chord, still present in memory, can only belong to the minor mode. Thus the composer creates the feeling of mystery by prodigiously simple means, while avoiding obscurity.<sup>58</sup>

The opening fifth is supported by a single chord, a triad 'lacking its third, F sharp or F natural, which would make it major or minor'.<sup>59</sup> Modern music 'must decide on one of these two modes, [...] but here we could believe they they no longer exist'. So powerful is Debussy's opening fifth that the history of tonality is marginalised: unlike the musicians of antiquity and the Middle Ages, 'these days, the third is required [...] because we prefer [tonal] precision to euphony'.<sup>60</sup> But Laloy does not remind us that this is not a modal piece: the fifth substitutes a sign of antiquity for the centre, for the 'triad' lacking a third, in a piece defined by chromaticism (in which thirds are variable) and the whole-tone scale (in which the major third is essential). The fifth as a form of the minor triad is defined by the influence of the following 'chord', which Laloy understands as  $V^{6}_3$ , because 'the chord on C', literally the second chord, 'disappears to give way to a  $^{6}_3$  chord, which, because of the interversion of its note order, represents the triad of A [minor]'.<sup>61</sup> Here Laloy alights on a profound point: that the meaning, even the identity, of one event in Debussy is dependent on contiguity, on the events that precede or follow it. There can be no

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<sup>58</sup> Laloy, *ibid.*, p. 117.

<sup>59</sup> Laloy, *ibid.*, p. 116.

<sup>60</sup> Laloy, *ibid.*, p. 116.

<sup>61</sup> Laloy, *ibid.*, p. 117.

question that Laloy's interpretation is plausible (the issue is why he needs to assert that the opening fifth is both minor and modal), or that it is <sup>locally</sup> consistent:

The A is the fifth above D. [...] To move from the tonic to the dominant is as natural a movement for the harmony as for the melody. This is why, at the slightest indication, we are inclined to be convinced by it. Music, in fact, is written not only for the ear but for the mind, and a progression of notes or chords, even a harmonious one, would be only a pleasant noise if the order of their succession seemed arbitrary.<sup>62</sup>

Thus, the fifth D-A defines both the melody and the harmonic progression, in effect as the fundamental bass (I-V) (Ex. 6). But this argument is used to explain away Debussy's obvious 'grammatical error', the consecutive fifths between the first and second chords (the bass descent D-C). According to Laloy, there is no progression from I to VII because G, the first note of b. 2, is a neighbour note:

Here the second fifth [C/G] does not abruptly strike against the first, because the G is heard only as a provisional note, and the phrase ends, the meaning is only complete, after the resolution of the G to A. Musical discourse has its syntax. Two triads constructed on D and C cannot be connected because they have only a very distant tonal relation.<sup>63</sup>

The fifth as sign of antiquity is inadmissible when it is most obvious, that is, when it is part of a progression, even though we learn later that 'our D-minor scale comprises C sharp [...] Here the C, very obvious in the bass, is not altered. A D-minor scale without leading note is the first mode of plainchant'.<sup>64</sup> Laloy wants to preserve the C natural as an ancillary sign of antiquity (confirming the first chord as modal), and to deny the progression I-VII in favour of I-V<sup>6</sup><sub>3</sub>, a progression in D minor, the tonal reading rejected at the outset as expressively 'insignificant'. Again, Laloy alights on an distinctive feature of Debussy's style — the ambiguity of the neighbour note. Laloy's reading is conventional, with the G explained as inessential, but Debussy writes a more complex progression than Laloy allows: I-VII-V<sup>6</sup><sub>3</sub>. It is defensible, too, to hear the whole of b. 2

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<sup>62</sup> Laloy, *ibid.*, p. 117.

<sup>63</sup> Laloy, *ibid.*, pp. 116-7.

<sup>64</sup> Laloy, *ibid.*, p. 118.

as an arpeggiation of  $VII^6_5$ ; and it is essential to consider the progression in the context of the whole Prelude. Ending on  $V^6_3$  is logical within these four bars, but rather 'illogical' when followed by the augmented 6th chord on Ab (b. 5), or when connected with the Bb in the bass (b. 12). Reading  $VII^6_5$  (bars 2, 4) is the first stage in reconstructing a large-scale progression D-C-Bb-A, I- $VII^6_5$ - $VI^6_5$ - $V^6_4$ , in which the added sixth chords on C and Bb are identical in type. Such an explanation searches for internal consistency, in this case the identity of added-sixth chord forms, which belong to the larger class of pentatonic chords. This criterion is also available to Laloy for bars 1-4: the two (or three) chords with which he is concerned belong to a single pentatonic scale (C-D-E-G-A), one feature of which is that it can be displayed in fifths (C-G-D-A-E), thus encapsulating the sign of antiquity in a scale form.

Laloy's analysis exemplifies the 'structurality' of structure in that the centre of the structure is 'thought', various sign substitutions are sought, while the candidates considered are internally incompatible. Laloy's sign of antiquity is variously invoked and retracted even when it is most appropriate: when consecutive fifths assert, perhaps as a cliché, modality and the 'mystery' of the past. This sign is therefore a 'supplement' which arises apparently in response to what is permissible ('music [...] is written also for the mind') as long as it does not break a rule, or violate a law regulating the interpretation, even while the interpretation is attempting to establish originality and modernity.<sup>65</sup> Among the contradictions of Laloy's analysis we can discern the deconstructive features of the composition (the contradictions register the inherent deconstructive features): modality, tonality, pentatonicism; organisation by fifths, the triadic 'disguise' of this organisation; harmonised neighbour note structures, the neighbour note as arpeggiation; to which we might add self-containedness, and relation to the whole. All these are present in the sense that they are available, and all are absent in the sense that no single one is necessary for the structural organisation. Laloy's self-contradictory text shuttles between one sign or the other depending on the local issue at hand, or behindhand: that his interpretation fails to

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<sup>65</sup> This topic is discussed in Eero Tarasti, *A Theory of Musical Semiotics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), in which Tarasti mistakenly claims that 'Debussy's narrative device, the parallel fifths, escapes his [Laloy's] attention', p. 31.

<sup>that</sup>  
 cohere demonstrates <sup>^</sup>'either/or' logic is undermined — not, of course, as an intentional  
 critical strategy but as a (faithful) reflection of the play within the compositional structure  
 that, as it advances into the extract, leads Laloy's analysis into contradiction.



### 3: Signifier and Symbol

#### *On the signifier*

3.1 Some of the significant confusion in Laloy originates from the indiscriminate call on different types of sign as if they existed on the same plane. This has a bearing on the origin of the disparity between Derrida's reading of semiotic relations and those of music theory. A common theoretical opposition assumes that musical semiosis is either introversive, as pure structure, or extroversive, as psychological and cultural meaning.<sup>1</sup> Following Jakobson's formalist definition of the 'poetic function' of language — 'the projection of the principle of equivalence of the axis of selection [paradigm] into the axis of combination [syntagm]'<sup>2</sup> — structuralist theories emphasise and reduce the musical signifier simply (and logically) to patterns of sound comprising similarities and oppositions (its phonological aspect).<sup>3</sup> Theories of discourse, on the other hand, have been absent in modern music theory except for the recent fashionability of narrative which reinstates the domain of the signifieds, reconstructs the unity of the sign by giving each musical signifier a referent, and permits the analyst to interpret.<sup>4</sup> Descriptive methods in structuralism therefore control and limit the playful mobility of Derrida's signifiers, while musical discourse (as narrative) frees up and plays with the fixed 'centrality' of the signifieds. This methodological separation sustains the autonomist/referentialist debate, now tolerated by the postmodern plurality that allows both positions to be held as valid.

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<sup>1</sup> This widely accepted opposition was formulated explicitly by Roman Jakobson. For a concise discussion see Nattiez, *Music and Discourse*, pp. 111-18.

<sup>2</sup> Roman Jakobson, 'Linguistics and poetics', in Thomas A. Sebeok (ed.), *Style in Language* (New York: MIT Press, 1960), p. 358.

<sup>3</sup> In 'Linguistics and poetics' Jakobson himself emphasises phonology at the expense of the signifieds which has led to a rather narrow application of the 'poetic function' to musical structure. For a demonstration of the analytical potential of the phonological model see David Clarke, *Language, Form, and Structure in the Music of Michael Tippett* (New York: Garland, 1989).

<sup>4</sup> See, especially, Abbate, *Unsung Voices*. A critique of recent theories of musical narrative is found in Jean-Jacques Nattiez, 'Can one speak of narrativity in music?', *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, Vol. 115, Part 2 (1990), pp. 240-57.

The sign, the union of the signifier (a word or other indicator) and signified (a concept or other mental event), stands for an object (the 'referent') in its absence. Considered introversively, the musical 'sign' lacks a signified and a referent (which is not only absent but non-existent). Considered extroversively, the musical sign contains a signified that cannot be consistently defined (for example, an emotion or particular musical character) because, beyond very wide categories (such as 'sadness' or 'joy'), agreement on the precise content of the sign cannot be guaranteed. Furthermore, since many signifiers are 'sad' they all refer to the one signified,<sup>5</sup> which means that, extroversively, music is a clumsy 'language' characterised mainly by redundancy in the plane of signifiers. By contrast, then, with the linguistic sign, music has an impoverished (though powerful) semantic level. The less obvious conclusion is that, assuming so many redundant signifiers to have a purpose, the signifiers function by mutual reference (that is, as a self-referential system): this conforms with Benveniste's assertion that 'if music is considered as a "language", it is a language with a syntax but without semiosis [*sémiotique*]'.<sup>6</sup> Thus the extroversive account of music leads us back to its introversive content.

The linguistic and musical signifiers are inversely related. The linguistic signifier is a simple sonic construct, but the plane of the signifieds is correspondingly rich: how many signifieds are there for the signifier 'do'? The musical signifier, on the other hand, is complex (even considered independently of its context), but the plane of signifieds is slender: even a unison statement like the opening of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony is a melodic, rhythmic and harmonic construct, but it has no signified other than a 'powerful tragic seriousness' ('Fate knocking at the door' is not a signified but an interpretation, <sup>simply</sup> which is another signifier).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> This is why Barthes writes that 'one can for instance ask some subjects about the meaning they attribute to a piece of music by submitting to them a list of verbalized signifieds [...]; whereas in fact all these verbal signs for a single musical signified ought to be designated by one single cipher which would imply no verbal dissection and no metaphorical small change'. Roland Barthes, *Elements of Semiology*, trans. Annette Lavers and Colin Smith (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967), pp. 45-6; translation modified.

<sup>6</sup> Emile Benveniste, 'Sémiologie de la langue', in *Problèmes de linguistique générale II* (Paris: Gallimard, 1974), p. 56.

<sup>7</sup> The problem of the musical signified is provisionally settled by Langer's concept of the 'unconsummated symbol' (a structure that seems to signify, but whose referent is absent), adopted by

Language begins to approximate to the signifier-richness of music when it becomes poetry; when the sonic potential of language is unleashed and signifiers begin to relate to one another as signifiers only. Thus Nattiez, following Jakobson, accepts the 'poetic function' as a model for music. The purpose of the 'poetic function' in language is to account for the ways in which sound conveys or encapsulates meaning, so that the signifiers create relationships among the signifieds (Tennyson's 'the murmuring of innumerable bees', for example). No such function exists for music which is opposed to language in this respect: the greater number of relationships established among the signifiers, the more self-sufficient they become; thus, it could be concluded that signifier-relations in music close off the plane of the signifieds (only simple musical signifiers have clear signifieds — cuckoos, clocks). Music therefore naturally tends to create pure relations of signifiers.

This brings us to the limit of structuralist theory, in which the crucial issue is the definition of the signifier. For Benveniste the note is a signifier; thus music lacks signification: for Nattiez the question is resolved by restating it as a matter of defining the minimal unit; thus music signifies by mimicking the oppositionality of phonemes in language (Jakobson's extrapolation from Saussure's signifier as 'acoustic image').<sup>8</sup> In Nattiez, this relationality is the agent of signification in that it describes a system of differences (constituting the 'neutral level' of analysis) whose meaning is explained outside 'pure' structure in a process of 'silent semiology', or symbolisation.<sup>9</sup> There are two problems with this: firstly, the notion of minimal units has no claim to be anything other than a methodological convenience;<sup>10</sup> secondly, the theory is anti-formalist, in that signification and meaning exist only outside structure. Why are these problematic? Because Nattiez's (laudable) concern to establish musical signification as a process (by

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Nattiez and supplemented by the notion that musical signification is realised in the production of further signifiers (essentially, metalanguages). See Suzanne K. Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite and Art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957).

<sup>8</sup> See Nattiez, *Music and Discourse*: 'the written note and the linguist's phoneme have the same epistemological status. [...] Phoneme and note are [...] "discretized" units rather than discrete units. This notion of "discretization" explains why analysis of classical music — given that the score is accepted as a reliable image of the sound — is facilitated (since the semiography is given, it does not need to be constructed)' (p. 81, n. 8).

<sup>9</sup> Nattiez, *Music and Discourse*, pp. 32-7.

<sup>10</sup> Nattiez: 'analysis of the neutral level is a methodological artefact'. *Music and Discourse*, p. 31.

adopting Peirce's concept of the interpretant) unintentionally consigns all musical 'material' (the *commas* signal a metaphor) to equivalence with the phoneme: and if musical material and phonemes have no intrinsic meaning, they are nothing more than the differential basis of signifier construction, and thus everything that constitutes 'music' lies outside structure. Nattiez's theory, despite its acceptance of an introversive dimension, is an extroversive theory.

Ruwet and Nattiez operate a double decomposition of the musical signifier, vertically and laterally. When the syntagm is segmented the resulting units are parametrically reduced to units of 'melody' (packages of pitch and rhythmic variables): thus the lateral (the syntagm) becomes 'vertical' (a potential paradigmatic unit), and the vertical (the 'complete' signifier) becomes 'lateral', in that its complexity is conceived as a hierarchy, some strata of which are set aside. The procedure has the minimal advantage that the signifier is presented as univocal, but informed intuition suggests that the musical signifier (if there is such a thing — we cannot define it abstractly) is not a univocal minimal whole but a maximal complex of parametrical variables defined by repetition and opposition: it differs from the linguistic signifier precisely because it must have the capacity of referring intrinsically. In this respect, the musical signifier is similar to the poetic signifier which has both semantic and sonic relations with other signifiers. But the musical signifier adds further complexity to the sonic dimension to compensate for the ambiguity, even arbitrariness, of music semantics. Thus, the self-referential function of the musical signifier must involve a masquerade also as signified; the signifier takes on the characteristics of the signified — conceptual overlap, similar and contiguous images, etc.: in short, everything that corresponds to relations in thought — to compensate for semantic instability. The musical sign is therefore characterised by complexity, over-determination of content, and a strategic supplementarity compensating for the dimension (semantics) it can almost do without. (As Derrida might put it, the complexity of the musical signifier supplements the lack on the part of the signified.) This, at least, is my understanding of the signifier from experience, and I propose it here as a hypothesis, supported by the following observations.

**3.1a** Unlike language, musical structure in Nattiez never reaches the stage of constructing signifiers, since the minimal units ('phonemes') are not permitted to combine as signifiers ('words'). Thus, the theory of the musical signifier as minimal unit, demands that 'the music itself' is a pre-signifying, 'neutral', 'methodological' artefact whose main function, it would appear, is to generate further signs (interpretants): it is only at this point that meaning can be said to begin to occur. (Of course, Nattiez's view is a fair reflection of some of the facts. Interpretants occur: a work generates an analysis, for example, which stands as the evidence of signification; but this is to assume that signification has not occurred previously.) It is therefore difficult to see, on the one hand, how Nattiez can justify accepting that music can signify introversively, since there are, strictly speaking, no intrinsic signs; and consequently, on the other, it is difficult to understand how music can appear to 'speak' directly to the competent musician (I am assuming that musical 'speech' is not simply an address to the emotions) since it must at least begin to traverse Peirce's 'infinity' of interpretants.

In Derrida's deconstructive reading, however, the sign stands for the referent in its absence, and therefore the sign is already *secondary*: the sign as a whole is not the origin of meaning but 'stands between two presents', the absence and return of the referent.<sup>11</sup> It is obvious, however, that the introversive musical sign does not share this secondariness — or, if it does, the notion of reference is severely problematised. Music could be a unique system within which signs are primary, in the sense that they create their own (self) reference, as long as the referring function is restricted to signifier-signified relations. (To go so far as claiming that music is only a pure relation of signifiers would be to do away with signification altogether, the equivalent of expressing the truism that one sound, or group of sounds, can be related to another.) Such a formulation would at least account for the fact that, despite the perennial difficulty of musical meaning, music seems to have a claim to the self-presence and closure which (in his deconstruction of the metaphysical and transcendental character of logocentrism) Derrida reveals to be an illusion in, and an

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<sup>11</sup> See Bennington, *Derridabase*, p. 24.

assertion for, language. From this point of departure, then, music is radically unlike language: music attains the dimension that language aspires to.

**3.1b** Music is like language, though, in that its signifiers are both sonic and graphic, and so Nattiez accepts the structuralist assumption that the signifier is the 'material' dimension of the sign.<sup>12</sup> As Derrida shows, however, this view is difficult to sustain. Saussure's description of the signifier as the 'acoustic image' of the sign implies that the signifier can be separated from the signified, and although Derrida allows that the sign 'gets its identity from the signifier',<sup>13</sup> this does entail that the signified is an entity that could be separated from it. The signifier is more than an image or sensible object because in order to function it must be repeatable, and this repetition occurs with variations (of tone, accent, context, etc.): thus, the signifier requires the ideality of the signified to guarantee that its sameness within these differences is operative.<sup>14</sup> For music, if we are not to resort to the 'clumsy language' notion of extroversion, this would seem (rather metaphysically) to push the signified-function of the sign back into the signifier. This combination seems to me likely, since it would ground the unique complexity of the musical signifier. But Derrida also emphasises that the signifier defines itself by the capacity for repetition (called 'iterability': repetition in language does not have to occur, but it must be meaningfully possible). Repetition, in fact, is the primary condition for signification and for the possibility of meaning, and is indispensable both for the sign and for larger discursive units:

as soon as there is sign, the difference between first time and repetition, and therefore between presence and non-presence, has already begun to blur. The sign is (only) its own representation.<sup>15</sup>

and:

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<sup>12</sup> Nattiez always refers to the 'neutral' level of analysis, which essentially comprises signifiers, as the physical and material embodiment of music as a symbolic form. See *Music and Discourse*, p. 12.

<sup>13</sup> Bennington, *Derridabase*, p. 30.

<sup>14</sup> 'What ensures the sameness in repetitions must be an ideality: the signifier is thus never purely or essentially sensible, even at the level of its phonological or graphological representation'. Bennington, *ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>15</sup> Bennington, *ibid.*, p. 68.

a statement that could not be quoted in another context would not be a statement, for a statement exists through the possibility of repetition in alterity — iterability.<sup>16</sup>

Thus, in language as in music, repetition has a primary function (as, for example, in the *Leitmotiv*). Since repetition is the distinctive feature of music and has a privileged function within it, it is tempting to conclude that repetition — including varied repetition or equivalence — is the primary means of sign creation in music, perhaps in proportion to its problematic retreat from the signified, from meaning. (Repetition is of course the determinant of the ontology of the musical units in structuralist analysis, as in Ruwet's 'machine for identifying elementary identities').<sup>17</sup> An essential condition for an introversive sign would therefore be that it must be repeated (that is, it must have equivalences).

**3.1c** Approached from another angle, the musical sign seems to present explicitly what has to be deconstructed for language: the linguistic signified in Derrida is a signifier put in a 'certain position' by other signifiers ('every signified is also in the position of a signifier'),<sup>18</sup> which is to say that there is no meaning but only 'effects' of meaning (strictly speaking, there is no stable signified). This description of language succinctly defines the extroversive dimension of music, and I think, productively sets aside the problem of semantics: what music means is not fixed or grounded, it is an effect not a cause. Such a view implies that introversive semiosis is the primary musical semiosis, and it could therefore be concluded that the arbitrariness of the sign insisted on by Saussure is predominant in music: the signifiers are arbitrarily related to the signifieds to the extent that signifieds become only 'effects of meaning' validated by representation in a metalanguage.<sup>19</sup> Metalinguistic descriptions would then stand as evidence that signification had occurred (Barthes writes that 'the signified has no materialisation other

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<sup>16</sup> Bennington, *ibid.*, p. 86.

<sup>17</sup> Nicholas Ruwet, 'Methods of analysis in musicology', trans. Mark Everist, *Music Analysis*, Vol. 6 (1987), p. 17.

<sup>18</sup> Derrida, *Positions*, p. 20.

<sup>19</sup> This view is fundamental to Nattiez's position: the three levels of the tripartition are 'grounded' by the neutral level, while the esthetic level is explicitly described as an interpretation or decoding of the neutral level.

than its typical signifier; therefore the signified cannot be handled except by imposing a metalanguage on it').<sup>20</sup> However, if the musical signifier exemplifies the limits of arbitrariness, then it is set free from the signified with the consequence that its relations (repetitions and oppositions) are given priority.

**3.1d** Such priority is given to the signifier in the post-structuralist conception of the linguistic sign. Lyotard discusses 'the interminable metonymy [of signification] which Saussure or any political economist understands by the name of exchange':<sup>21</sup> currency changes hands, musical material attaches itself to one unit or the other, or one meaning or another is attached to it, but stable value or meaning is either absent or an insubstantial idea. The Lyotardian sign 'at once screens and calls up what it both announces and conceals'<sup>22</sup> (for example, the coin and monetary value); signification, therefore, 'is also only made up of signs, and goes on for ever, so we can never get anything but cross references, signification is always deferred, and meaning is never present in flesh and blood'.<sup>23</sup> A similar description of the sign is found in Deleuze and Guattari,<sup>24</sup> and Lacan's 'signifying chain' is constituted almost entirely by signifier-relations (dominated by metonymy and, more problematically, metaphor). In Bowie's words, the Lacanian signifier,

far from being simply a self-bounded system, has an active colonising power over the signified [...] meaning no longer emerges wraith-like from the impersonal operations of the signifier but acquires from them its force, its local character and the quality Lacan describes as its *insistence*. Responsibility for the production of meaning no longer falls to both interactive components of the sign [signifier and signified] but to one component [signifier] hugely re-energised.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Roland Barthes, *Elements of Semiology*, pp. 45-6; translation modified.

<sup>21</sup> Jean-François Lyotard, 'The tensor', in *The Lyotard Reader*, ed. Andrew Benjamin (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), p. 1.

<sup>22</sup> Lyotard, *ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>23</sup> Lyotard, *ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

<sup>24</sup> 'Every sign refers to another sign, and only to another sign, ad infinitum. That is why, at the limit, one can forgo the notion of the sign, for what is retained is [...] only the formal relation of sign to sign insofar as it defines a so-called signifying chain'. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (London: Athlone, 1987), p. 112.

<sup>25</sup> Malcolm Bowie, *Lacan* (London: Fontana, 1991), p. 65. Italics in the original.



For several reasons, these formulations of the 'interminable' and 're-energised' signifier could be also described<sup>26</sup> as its 'musicalisation'. They dynamise signification by putting 'stable meaning' in parenthesis: the referent becomes something to be attained, an active process fraught with blockages and detours, rather than the structuralist anchor of language. Furthermore, the priority of the signifier has a historical dimension, a genealogy that originates in poetic Symbolism and leads through Saussure to Lacan and beyond. Generally speaking, signifier-priority asserted the self-sufficiency, or 'materiality' of the signifier, first as a revitalised theory of mimesis.<sup>26</sup> Once Saussure had established the arbitrary relation of signifier and signified thus negating the necessary relation in mimesis, arbitrariness is appropriated as a simile for the polysemy of the symbol: Saussure's signifier-signified relation, is made into a 'symbolic' relation by the suggestion in art or psychoanalysis that Saussure's relation requires interpretation. Thus, as a representation of the symbol, the relation signifier-signified 'expresses an interplay and shifting of signifieds beneath the continuous signifying chain'.<sup>27</sup> Lacan's 'Symbolic' dimension, 'the function which gives meaning to existence, as well as the setting for this operation',<sup>28</sup> is Language itself colonised by the signifiers. Significantly here, Lacan elaborates Language by analogy with *discourse* and *music*. The 'linearity' (syntagm) that Saussure considered to be 'a constituent of the discursive chain [...] is, while necessary, not sufficient [...]; one need only listen to poetry [...] in order to detect a polyphony, and to notice that any such discourse aligns itself with several scales of variation'.<sup>29</sup> The signifying chain, and the signifiers themselves, are complicated by this definition: beyond Saussure's 'acoustic image' of the sign, Lacan finds a plurivocal discursive plane opposed to the univocal ('homophonic', so to speak) signifier in relation to the signified. Music is the analogy, perhaps the model, that determines variation within the signifying chain, split horizontally. Taking Lacan's 'polyphony' literally, the signifier is equivocal, with a

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<sup>26</sup> In 1886 René Ghil announced the 'reintegration' of the phonetic value of language through which words had regained their total and original meaning, and which would lead to a 'restored' music language. Quoted in Claude Abastado, 'The language of Symbolism', in Anna Balakian (ed.), *The Symbolist Movement in the Literature of the European Languages* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1982), p. 90.

<sup>27</sup> Abastado, *ibid.*, p. 96.

<sup>28</sup> Abastado, *ibid.*, p. 97.

<sup>29</sup> Lacan, *Écrits*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Tavistock, 1977), quoted in Abastado, *ibid.*, p. 97.

coherent surface theme as the pretext beneath which a second theme or discourse is conducted. Read figuratively, 'polyphony' indicates a functional split, as if the signifier were constituted by different parameters, mutually dependent, but showing a tendency to autonomous organisation. Crucially, in neither reading, neither level is the signified: the signifier has colonised the signified's referential function and draws what is going on underneath into itself in a dialectic (Adorno's dialectic of schemata and surface in music is comparable),<sup>30</sup> so that the signified is pushed down to a profound level of meaning, attainable only once the 'layers' of the signified have been penetrated. Thus, the more complex the signifier becomes, the more it comes to resemble the musical signifier, and the more elusive meaning becomes (the retreat of the signified), and the harder the signifier must work.

**3.1e** After Saussure, language therefore appears to resemble pre-postmodern music, replete with floating signifiers and Baudrillard's shimmering metonymic surfaces, in short everything (and more) that constitutes Langer's 'unconsummated symbol'. Except that:

a) the signifier-contingency of music (considered introversively) promotes wholeness and closure, whereas the the signifier-contingency of language leads to fragmentation and infinite cross reference;

b) when music is considered extroversively, or (as in postmodern music) operates extroversively (for example, intertextually, ironically, neoclassically, in moments), the illusion of wholeness is obliterated, or intentionally shattered, by the referents its signs connect with; thus, extroverse semiosis in music, which promotes fragmentation in a series of instants (in conflict with intrinsic logic), has an effect opposed to the structuralist conception of language in which the signifiers, though arbitrary, are grounded by a system in the signifieds.

Whereas 'logocentric' systems in language are defined by signifier relations in the sense that they organise and close off systems of signifieds in the interest of conceptual wholeness and coherence, in music the opposite occurs: the more music refers

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<sup>30</sup> Theodor Adorno, 'On the problem of musical analysis', *Music Analysis*, Vol. 1 (1982), p. 173.

extroversively, the more fragmented, unstable and — crucially — contingent it becomes (recall, for example, the old debates about programme music); this, I think, is because extroversive semiosis does not *organise* the signifieds (as language does) but relies either on single referents brought into the relatively weak relation of succession (contiguity) or on a prior organisation (for example, a programme). Thus, the extroversive sign itself is weak because it lacks organisational power: because its signifieds are weakly organised, the burden of meaning is transferred to, or appropriated by, the signifier. The introversive sign is truly music's domain.

**3.2** Thus we return to Derrida: the metonymic notion of the sign is embraced and surpassed by *différance*, the combined effect of differing and deferring present in any mode of signification — that is to say, the sign's spatialising (differing) and temporalising (deferring) functions.

To differ:

the sense of not being identical, of being other, of being discernible, etc. And in 'differents', whether referring to the alterity of dissimilarity or the alterity of allergy or of polemics, it is necessary that interval, distance, *spacing* occur among the different elements and occur actively, dynamically, and with a certain perseverance in repetition.<sup>31</sup>

To defer:

the action of postponing until later, of taking into account, the taking-account of time and forces in an operation that implies an economic reckoning, a detour, a respite, a delay, a reserve, a representation — all the concepts I will sum up here in a word I have never used but which could be added to this series: *temporalizing*.<sup>32</sup>

These operations are 'conjoined' in the sign according to Saussure's declaration that 'arbitrary and differential are two correlative qualities'<sup>33</sup> (Derrida recalls that the

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<sup>31</sup> Jacques Derrida, 'Différance', in *Speech and Phenomena*, trans. David B. Ellison (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), pp. 136-7. Italics in the original.

<sup>32</sup> Derrida, *ibid.*, p. 136. Italics in the original.

<sup>33</sup> Quoted in Derrida, *ibid.*, p. 139.

arbitrariness of signifier and signified is possible because a sign system is constituted only by the differences among its terms, and not by their 'fullness'.<sup>34</sup> However, Derrida states quite definitely that *différance* 'is the movement by which language, or any code, any system of reference in general, becomes "historically" constituted as a fabric of differences'.<sup>35</sup> The natural 'site' of *différance* is therefore the relation signifier-signified-referent, a vertical relation so to speak, in which differences between signs co-exist with the deferral of contact with the signified (and, further down, the referent); in music, then, *différance* would seem to sit most easily with the extroversive signs. But the deferral just described will take the form of a progression along the signifying chain: and this traversal of 'space', the different signifiers, will result in a temporal 'space', a delay, thus revealing what Derrida calls the 'metaphysical' aspect of *différance*. That is to say, because *différance* as differing involves an interval, and as deferring involves detour, it makes space exist in a state of 'becoming-temporal' and time in a state of 'becoming-spatial'. This emphasis of the temporal seems to originate with Derrida, but it is shared by Deleuze and Guattari,<sup>36</sup> Lyotard, and Lacan, since what they call 'metonymic' in the signifiers is always prevarication, delay, postponement: or, in music, potentially, prolongation and implication.<sup>37</sup>

The upshot of this is that, whenever the signified or the referent are brought in, *différance* quickly refers any process back to the relation of signifiers. It should therefore be safe to assume that *différance* can be confined to the signifiers alone. But Derrida emphasises that

as the condition for signification, this principle of difference affects the *whole sign*  
[...] the signified concept is never present in itself, in an adequate presence that would

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<sup>34</sup> Derrida, *ibid.*, p. 139.

<sup>35</sup> Derrida, *ibid.*, p. 141.

<sup>36</sup> 'The presence of the sign is a contraction of time. It is simultaneously an indicator of future potential and a symptom of a past. It envelops material tendencies pointing forward [...] and backward [...]'. Brian Massumi, *A User's Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia: Deviations from Deleuze and Guattari* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993), pp. 10-11.

<sup>37</sup> This remains to be explored fully. One such attempt, Robert Snarrenberg's exploration of *différance*, all too easily dissolves analytically into Meyer's implication-realisation model. The issue here is whether the difference between an application of Derrida's strategies and Meyer's model is important. Does the re-inscription of one mode of discourse in the terms of another tell us something about a musical work as well as about theoretical representations of it? If not, then there is little to be gained. See Robert Snarrenberg, 'The Play of *Différance*', *In Theory Only*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (1987), pp. 1-25.

refer only to itself. Every concept is necessarily and essentially inscribed in a chain or system, within which it refers to another and to other concepts, by the systematic play of differences. Such a play then — *différance* — [...] is not a concept, is not a mere word; that is, it is not what we represent to ourselves as the calm and and present self-referentiality of a concept and sound.<sup>38</sup>

*Différance* works both vertically (between signifier and signified) and laterally (in both the plane of signifiers and that of the signifieds), but there is, I think, an important difference in function: whereas 'differing' is operative in both vertical and lateral dimensions, 'deferral' will always operate via the signifiers. It is impossible to exemplify deferral among the signifieds alone without the agency of the signifier. Thus, it can be now more cautiously concluded, the signifier retains a priority in the sign because it is the 'material' evidence of *différance*, with the proviso that although everything points to the priority of the signifier in music, it is impoverished without some residual concept of the signified and the sign as a whole.<sup>39</sup> While Nattiez argues that music can be symbolised (in an analysis, for example), the phonemic model (even as a methodological convenience) is an impoverished basis on which to erect a theory of the symbol. It leaves a gap between the 'fullness' of symbolisation (the 'unconsummated' symbol has an even more mysterious completeness or self-sufficiency) and the meaningless system of differences constituted by the musical 'phonemes'.

3.3 So, finally, *différance* brings us back to the signifier, but to which concept of the signifier? A 'material' signifier (a signifier said to be constituted autonomously by its content) entails that fundamentally all signifiers are 'neutrally' comparable, and this may be true: this at least asserts their status as signifiers whose content is accounted for by determining relations of similarity and difference, and on which elementary concepts of function can be erected. Such functions are represented spatially in analysis (a paradigmatic analysis, for example), resolving the temporal into the spatial, and in effect

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<sup>38</sup> Derrida, 'Différance', pp. 139-40. Italics in the original.

<sup>39</sup> Bennington comments generally that 'we cannot simply decide to do without the concept of the sign, nor simply replace it with that of the signifier, [...] if we did so we should deprive ourselves of the opportunity for translation'. Bennington, *Derridabase*, p. 37.

obeying the law of *différance* of time's becoming-spatial (deferring). (If there is a universal effect of music analysis, it is this tendency.) But musical function is more complex than this, and depends on the temporal content of *différance* as Derrida describes it:

Différance is what makes the movement of signification possible only if each element said to be 'present', appearing on the stage of presence, is related to something other than itself but retains the mark of a past element and already lets itself be hollowed out by the mark of its relation to a future element. This trace relates no less to the future than to what is called the past.<sup>40</sup>

Read 'spatially' this describes differing, but it also describes the essential fact of relational structure: words, terms or units are defined by difference, but their similarities and differences are also inscribed within them (no 'culture' without 'nature', etc.). Read 'temporally', the quotation describes deferring, and in doing so, it overlaps considerably with both Bergson's concept of duration as a becoming (§4.4) and with Jean Barraqué's understanding of Debussy's music as a 'perpetual becoming'.<sup>41</sup> These ontological concepts are time-dependent (a 'becoming' in space will always be resolved as a primarily temporal process) and are therefore uniquely suited to music. And their dependence on spatial-temporal interpenetration means that *différance* expresses a fundamental element of Symbolism, since it describes a primordial *correspondance* of space and time in which the one is resolved into the other. Furthermore, in both Derrida and Lacan linguistic meaning is something to be achieved, and the signified is something to be attained. Rather than existing as the ground of the sign that expresses it, the impulse toward meaning is produced by the signifiers, as if meaning were unfamiliar, extraordinary, and something to be discovered. (Although the simple or literal signifieds of the signifiers are in place, they are somehow insufficient.) This 'profundity' of the signified in Lacan makes it work hard, raising the stakes of meaning so that meaning takes on the burden of truth. Such 'truth' resembles both the musical sign and the Symbolist 'Idea', mysterious, inaccessible,

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<sup>40</sup> Derrida, 'Différance', p. 142.

<sup>41</sup> Jean Barraqué, 'La mer de Debussy, ou la naissance des formes ouvertes', ed. Alain Poirier, *Analyse musicale*, No. 12 (June 1988), pp. 15-62.



and difficult to grasp, which can be glimpsed only in its signifiers, or, more precisely, through their relations — *correspondances* — within a field of signification.

The important thing to note here is that the post-structuralist sign, originating in Symbolist theory, ceases to reserve music as a special case of signification. Music is the model for language: the musical signifier — which has changed little throughout the shifts in linguistic thought — now resembles the deconstructed (or at least post-structed) linguistic signifier, both of which share a common source in the Symbolist concepts of language and poetry (§§3.6, 4.1). Thus, like the musical signifier, the deconstructed linguistic signifier is not material, although its complexity tends to make it 'substantial' without being 'full' (that is, univocally expressing its signified). While such a description quickly tends towards the metaphysical (Derrida says that the sign and metaphysics cannot be separated),<sup>42</sup> it must always be remembered that the free-floating instability of the signifier is limited in language and music by repetition.

### *On the Symbol in Theory*

**3.4** The post-structuralist symbol is conterminous with the introversive musical sign. 'At the limit of signification', Deleuze and Guattari write, when the sign's relation to things (referents) or entities (signifieds) is attenuated, 'the sign [...] is thought of as a *symbol* in a constant movement of referral from sign to sign'.<sup>43</sup> On this definition, the symbol could be taken to be the purest expression of *différance*:

The question is not yet what a given sign signifies but to which other signs it refers, or which signs add themselves to it to form a network of signs without beginning or end that projects its shadow onto an amorphous atmospheric continuum. [...] the world begins to signify before anyone knows *what* it signifies.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> See Bennington, *Derridabase*, p. 129.

<sup>43</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 112. Italics in the original.

<sup>44</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *ibid.*, p. 112. Italics in the original.

This differential view of symbolisation seems to me to be an apt description of the Symbolist theory of *correspondances* (§4.2), and perhaps the best short statement of the nature of the musical sign in general. Deleuze and Guattari's view is historically contingent on the Symbolist tradition (like Lacan's psychoanalytic 'symbolic' order which is constituted by the signifiers alone), in which, naturally, signs are treated 'symbolically' in their sense of the term. The same could be said of Nattiez's 'polysemic' musical symbol: 'symbolic form', which I understand to mean the musical sign-regime, designates 'music's capacity (with all other possible symbolic forms) to give rise to a complex and infinite web of interpretants'.<sup>45</sup> Interpretants of course become further signifiers, but since they are not necessarily or even primarily within the work but outside it (in an analysis, or another work, for example), Nattiez's interpretants could be said to function as signifieds (as 'meanings'). Thus Nattiez's 'symbolic form' describes the tendency toward extroversion in the sign (§3.1), and delineates the tension between inside and outside, signifier and signified basic to any trope, including the symbol.

Such a conception of the symbol is problematic for analysis and criticism because it seems to assert that all signs are symbols — in particular, the musical sign. But this is imprecise: both Nattiez, explicitly, and Deleuze and Guattari, implicitly, are concerned with 'symbolic form', a network of signs behaving symbolically over large areas: it is therefore only as a structure or system that 'symbolisation' comes into being. This entails that in Nattiez the musical work as a whole is a signifier, with the signifieds reinstated outside the work; the work itself becomes implicated in a regime of polysemic signs, as a signifier generating multiple signifieds, a feature emphasised in most definitions of the symbol. However, a universalising definition such as Nattiez's will tend to underplay both the power of specific symbols and a work that is determinately Symbolist. Reductively speaking, 'music as symbolic form' will run the risk of placing a tonic triad and the 'Tristan' chord as they appear in Debussy's *Pelléas* on the same plane (at least initially), since both will give rise to the infinite series of interpretants.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Nattiez, *Music and Discourse*, pp. 36-7. In italics in the original.

<sup>46</sup> Dan Sperber's observation that 'there is no need for an analysis of the symbolic phenomenon into symbols' seems also to be Nattiez's position, but my concern here is to lay the ground for



3.5 Primary distinctions must therefore be made between 'sign', 'symbolic form' and 'symbol':

a) If it is to be distinguished from the sign, then the symbol can be said to wrest meaning from *différance* by insisting on a homology of expression (signifier) and content (signified): it can therefore be taken as a special type of sign<sup>47</sup> exploiting degrees of similarity among various dimensions. Ducrot and Todorov argue that the process of symbolisation is 'a more or less stable association between two units of the same level (that is, two signifiers or two signifieds). The word *flame* signifies flame, but it also symbolises love in certain literary works'.<sup>48</sup> Here *flame* (the signifier) signifies flame (signified 1) which in turn becomes the signifier of love (signified 2). This example is of course a metaphor; and as soon as the symbol is understood as a figure, as it must be in literature, the signifier (*flame*) is taken to have multiple signifieds (two in this case). Therefore, like Nattiez's symbolic form in music, the literary symbol is polysemic.

b) If a distinction is to be made between 'symbolic form' and the symbol, then it must lie in the fact that the symbol puts a stop to the endless signification in symbolic form: while the symbol can be polysemic and complex ('imprecise'), these meanings must also be finite and fixed in context. Ricoeur defines 'symbol' as:

any structure of signification in which a direct, primary, literal meaning designates, in addition, another meaning which is indirect, secondary and figurative and which can be apprehended only through the first.<sup>49</sup>

The symbol therefore expands the referential field of the signifier to produce relations among the signifieds, and 'conveys an imprecise meaning which can be interpreted in various ways'.<sup>50</sup> Consequently, Ricoeur's symbol is the object of interpretation, its

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distinguishing the symbol within symbolic form. Quoted in David Cooper, *Metaphor* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), p. 138.

<sup>47</sup> See Tzvetan Todorov, *Theories of the Symbol*, trans. Catherine Porter (Oxford: Blackwell, 1982), pp. 9-10.

<sup>48</sup> Oswald Ducrot and Tzvetan Todorov, *Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Sciences of Language*, trans. Catherine Porter (Oxford: Blackwell, 1979), p. 102. Italics in the original.

<sup>49</sup> Paul Ricoeur, 'Existence and hermeneutics', trans. Kathleen McLaughlin, in *The Conflict of Interpretations* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1974), pp. 12-13.

<sup>50</sup> Jarocinski, *Debussy*, pp. 23-4.

'correlative concept', which deciphers the 'hidden meaning' in the apparent meaning of the symbol and unfolds 'the levels of meaning implied in the literal meaning'.<sup>51</sup>

This can be contrasted with Jarocinski's assertion that the 'transposition of meaning' in the symbol has a 'dynamic' function because the process of symbolisation is 'spontaneous, and because the artist is bringing to light a non-conventional analogy, intervening either between phenomena exterior to himself, or between the external world and his own experience'.<sup>52</sup> The main issue inherent in this contrast is the relation of the symbol and the symbolised (signifier and signified): is the relation conventional or non-conventional? Penny Florence admits convention only. The symbol is

a kind of sign which is associated with the represented object by a conventional rule. It denotes a kind of thing and has a general meaning. It cannot indicate or be a single thing. Symbols are prevalent in temporal, auditory signs.<sup>53</sup>

Florence limits the symbol to language and music, installs the fixed signified-signifier relation, and determines the signified as a quality rather than an object, perhaps even a feeling rather than a concept. As she explains, however, the temporal implies 'movement' and this expresses something of Jarocinski's 'dynamic function' of symbolisation, which in turn overlaps with Eco's assertion that symbolic meaning 'requires a specific semiotic strategy' so that 'the symbolic mode [...] represents a case of *textual implicature*'.<sup>54</sup>

Eco confirms the necessity of interpretation: if symbols are to be textually implicated then they must be interpreted by the reader for the implicature to signify. The symbol, as a sign, is implicated with other signs in the text (laterally, so to speak), and, fundamentally, contains within it a fixed relationship to a signified. This would seem to be the import of Ricoeur's insistence that the 'secondary, figurative meaning' in the symbol can be understood only by means of the literal meaning: to take an example from

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<sup>51</sup> Ricoeur, 'Existence', p. 13.

<sup>52</sup> Jarocinski, *Debussy*, p. 24.

<sup>53</sup> Penny Florence, *Mallarmé, Manet and Redon: Visual and Aural Signs and the Generation of Meaning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 151, note 5.

<sup>54</sup> Umberto Eco, *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language* (London: Macmillan, 1984), p. 157. Italics in the original.

Hegel,<sup>55</sup> 'strength' can be communicated via 'lion', its signifier, but Eco's gloss shows that this will have symbolic power only if the text finds a role for 'lion' that reaches beyond a function in the plot or narrative.<sup>56</sup> According to Eco, this role should also be 'overdetermined', interpretively 'doubtful' and have 'doubtful' reasons for appearing in the text — which is to say that it is characterised by ambiguity:

the symbol says that there is something it could not say, but this something cannot be definitely spelled out once and for all; otherwise the symbol would stop saying it. The symbol says clearly only that it is a semiotic machine devised to function in the symbolic mode.<sup>57</sup>

It could therefore be assumed that the conventional relation within the symbol is a local convention established within the text, subject only to the constraints of similarity (in which case the symbol will act metaphorically) or contiguity (in which case, metonymy); and since the symbol is a type of figure, it will appear to be 'non-conventional' in proportion to its novelty.

**3.6** In music, Nattiez's 'symbolic form' excludes textual implicature, unless 'text' is understood to be an interpretive trace (a commentary, analysis or body of semantic data). As noted above, Nattiez's definition entails that music is the symbol (signifier) referring to multiple signifieds (interpretations), but it would be more true to the facts to say that the interpretations are the signifiers of the work with which they are associated: this would at least bring the notion of symbolic form into line with Symbolist aesthetics, in which a complex of signifiers (symbols) refer to a single signified (the 'Idea'). 'Symbolic form' in music therefore reverses the movement within the literary symbol (as defined for example by Ricoeur). In both cases, the symbol refers outside the work. But in music the symbol is a signifier generating verbal or analytical signifiers which have meaning only in relation

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<sup>55</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics*, trans. Michael Inwood (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993), p. 83.

<sup>56</sup> See also Eco's discussion of the symbolic function of the clock in Gérard de Nerval's *Sylvie*, in *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language* (London: Macmillan, 1984), pp. 159-60.

<sup>57</sup> Eco, *Semiotics and Language*, p. 161. On this ground, the symbol is distinguished from metaphor, the effectiveness of which will *decrease* in proportion to its ambiguity. This, of course, does not prevent metaphor from being subtle, striking or complex.

to the generating signifier existing *inside* the work: thus, the originary signifier becomes the signified of the secondary signifiers (interpretations). In literature, however, the originary signifier is best understood as a full sign (here I part company with Ducrot and Todorov's definition), that is, it already has a meaning (a literal one) which is then disseminated figuratively, drawing on a range of extra-textual associations selected and limited by the text itself. Thus, whereas in music 'symbolic form' is a signifier-signifieds relation, the elements of the literary symbol are on equal footing as a sign-to-sign relation. This is why Barthes can define the 'symbolic grouping' in literature as 'the place for multivalence and reversibility; the main task is always to demonstrate that this field can be entered from any number of points, thereby making depth and secrecy problematic'.<sup>58</sup> Reversibility would seem to be a property that can exist fully when the symbol operates in a single dimension — when, for example, the literary symbol exploits the field of language through rhetoric; if the symbol connects two dimensions — for example, music and language — then its reversibility loses force because difficulties of translation are encountered. Symbols in music can be easily understood when they are logical notations (as in a score) because the code is established (an analogy in language is Morse code), but this is not a creative relationship. If reversibility is to become a feature of the musical symbol, it will perhaps be modelled on the literary symbol, as a relation of full signs.

In general, then, the symbol describes a relation of the literal and the figurative, of a sign functioning as signifier and multiple signifieds, and as a central locus controlling a field of associations. This field can be traversed in various ways, at one extreme through conventional or pre-established associations (in which case it is relatively weak),<sup>59</sup> at the other as a (finite) multiplicity of relations established in the figural implications (strategies) of a text. In particular, however, the Symbolist symbol 'move[s] towards the perfect sign, which is not unitary or exclusively introversive, but is a transition. It does not convey an ideal or perfect image of something, but makes innovation possible by incorporating

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<sup>58</sup> Barthes, *S/Z*, p. 19.

<sup>59</sup> Schopenhauer writes that 'if certain historical or mythical persons or personified conceptions are made known by symbols fixed on once and for all, these are properly called *emblems*'. Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, Vol. 1, trans. E. J. F. Payne (New York: Dover, 1969), p. 239. Italics in the original.

movement and time'.<sup>60</sup> The infusion of time into this semiotic regime is a subtle force that explores the movement of *différance* (the temporally-conceived sign) and which counteracts the sign's structuralist formulation as a purely spatial, reified relationship between images and objects. However, this brings us to another inversion. If the musical sign, a temporal phenomenon, is to be distinguished from the musical symbol in theory then music's natural or 'literal' domain will have to be shaped, a shaping that is, I think, spatial: space is injected into the sign in order to construct the symbol, which will refer to a 'fixed object', a constant (fixedness is fundamentally a spatial attribute).

It seems, therefore, that the difference between the literary and musical symbols is that the first is a temporally-infused spatial sign, and the second a spatially-infused temporal sign. Opera, as an impure genre, facilitates the symbolic in its ready-made oppositions — music/words/character/action — which a composer edges towards identity, and therefore semiotic unity. If the musical symbol is both to share the features of the literary symbol and to function dramatically it must go beyond the signifier-relations of introversive semiosis to reach some accommodation with the signified and negotiate the tension of 'inside and outside', of musical Self and dramatic Other.

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<sup>60</sup> Florence, *Mallarmé, Manet and Redon*, p. 5.

## 4: Symbolism

**4.1** The essential fact of Symbolism is semantic indeterminacy, an openness of signification that makes space for the multiplicity of relations, or *correspondances*. As we have seen, this is true of any symbolic mode and is particularly characteristic of music, which as traditionally conceived is the analogue to the libidinal economy<sup>1</sup> of our emotional life, and to the 'movements of the soul'. In this metaphysical sense, musical Symbolism is mimetic, but the special feature of the Symbolist symbol is that it is not *simply* mimetic, nor is it or conventional. As a style, Symbolism had therefore to carve out a territory within symbolism, the universal artistic fact that had always involved various degrees of resemblance, representation or mimesis. In literature, the style is predicated on the injunction to 'symbolize rather than signify',<sup>2</sup> or in Mallarmé's terms, on suggestion rather than naming, guessing not telling.<sup>3</sup> It therefore gives primacy to the figurative over the literal, creates from sound before sense, and rejects 'ideas' in favour of the Idea (*Idéal*), which insofar as it can be defined, is an image beyond images, an unnameable signified (Mallarmé: 'I say: a flower! and [...] musically there arises, pleasurably, the idea itself, the flower absent from all bouquets').<sup>4</sup> Mallarmé is therefore at once prescient of, and more sophisticated than, Saussure. The signifier ('a flower!') refers to an idea, as in Saussure, but is not itself sufficient to evoke it: if it were, poetry could consist only of nouns, and would have no need of the symbols, figures, and correspondences that communicate the (often synesthetic) reality of the idea — a reality that transcends the concrete object.

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<sup>1</sup> Jean-François Lyotard, *The Lyotard Reader*, p. 158.

<sup>2</sup> Tzvetan Todorov, *Symbolism and Interpretation*, trans. Catherine Porter (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983), p. 88.

<sup>3</sup> 'To name an object is to suppress three-quarters of the pleasure of the poem, which derives from the satisfaction of guessing little by little; to suggest the object, that is the dream. This is the perfect use of the mystery that constitutes the symbol'. Stéphane Mallarmé, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Henri Mondor and G. Jean-Aubry (Paris: Gallimard, 1945), p. 869.

<sup>4</sup> Mallarmé, *Oeuvres complètes*, p. 368.

In Jean Moréas's manifesto (1886),

Symbolist poetry seeks to: clothe the Idea in a *perceivable form* [*forme sensible*] that, nevertheless, should not be an end in itself but, in serving to express the Idea, should remain subject [to it]. The Idea, in turn, must not allow itself to be seen deprived of its sumptuous outer garments [*simarres*]; exterior analogies. [...] the essential character of symbolic art consists in not going as far as the Idea itself. [...] manifestations of feeling are destined to represent their esoteric affinities with primordial Ideas.<sup>5</sup>

The prohibition on naming suppresses the central signifier and constitutes the dimension of the unattainable in Symbolism ('not going as far as the Idea itself'). This problematises the act of reading and exaggerates the indeterminacy of all literary texts. If, in Wolfgang Iser's words, 'meanings in literary texts are mainly generated in the act of reading; they are the product of a rather difficult interaction between text and reader and [are] not qualities hidden in the text',<sup>6</sup> then Symbolism raises the stakes in the author's gamble on the reader's response by simultaneously creating the impression that a concrete meaning exists while at the same time actively subverting any such decoding. As a result, 19th-century Symbolism has often had a bad press in recent literary theory. Accused of imprecision and obfuscation, it could almost be the idealisation of a vice (young Nietzsche: 'an excessive use of metaphor obscures and leads to enigmas').<sup>7</sup> Mallarmé's prescription of the symbol, 'to suggest it [an object] — that is the dream ideal', to evoke an object or to use it to discover a 'state of soul', is glossed by Harland as the composition of 'patterns, signs and configurations, all secretly implicating one another in interminable "correspondences"'.<sup>8</sup> Maeterlinck's indeterminacy of meaning suffers a similar fate in that he 'asks his readers to daydream over insignificant sentences',<sup>9</sup> to supply the missing

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<sup>5</sup> Jean Moréas, 'Le Symbolisme', *Figaro*, 18 September 1886, in Michael Pakenham (ed.), *Les premières armes du Symbolisme* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1973), pp. 31-2.

<sup>6</sup> Wolfgang Iser, 'Indeterminacy and the reader's response in prose fiction', in J. Hillis Miller (ed.), *Aspects of Narrative* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), p. 4.

<sup>7</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche on *Rhetoric and Language*, ed. and trans. Sander L. Gilman, Carole Blair and David J. Parent (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 57.

<sup>8</sup> Richard Harland, *Superstructuralism: The Philosophy of Structuralism and Post-structuralism* (London, Methuen, 1987), p. 152.

<sup>9</sup> Todorov, *Symbolism and Interpretation*, p. 89. The reference is to Maeterlinck's *Pelléas et Mélisande*, Act 1, scene 4.

meanings to support the "'symbolic" justification' of such indeterminacy. Fashions change, but Todorov's justification for this judgement — that the aesthetic content of Maeterlinck's play (1893) is too remote to be recaptured — is weak and critically flawed.

Mélisande's 'insignificant sentences' are a series of anaphora, the rhetorical trope characterised by repetition:

I can see a faint light I had not seen before [...] Now the ship has moved into the light [...] It's the ship that brought me here [...] That is the ship that brought me here. The ship with big sails. I recognise her by her sails. [...] Why set sail on such a rough night? She is almost out of sight. [...] I can see some other lights [...] But look! You see, my hands are full of flowers [...] <sup>10</sup>

Mélisande speaks almost without reference to the intervening utterances of the other characters, creating the sequence {light, ship: ship, big sails: sails, out of sight: other lights, flowers} in which repetition marks significant words as signifiers whose signified must be provided by the audience and sought among other repeated 'insignificances' in the play. Beyond this, though, we are invited to visualise this scene as a figural complex of metonymy, synecdoche and metaphor: the ship appears in the light (metonymy), a reciprocal association since the lights are both carried by and reveal the ship; Mélisande recognises the ship by its sails (synecdoche); it moves out of sight to reveal other lights; and Mélisande's attention shifts from the lights to the flowers (a metaphor). What all this means is not historically dependent, but is provided (though not explained) within the play. Since Mélisande's origins are obscure, the ship on which she arrived is a potential, perhaps symbolic, ark and a beacon of hope (symbolised by the lights, called 'beacons'); but as it disappears into the distance she fears that it will be shipwrecked; she will be trapped in the kingdom of Allemonde (the symbolic name of existence)<sup>10</sup> in which she is a stranger; the lights attract her attention once more, and when Pelléas offers to take her hand, she cannot reciprocate because, as if she had not been aware of it, she realises that her hands are full of flowers. Lights, the symbol of hope and escape have become, through metaphor, flowers. Crucially for the narrative, these now prevent her from

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<sup>10</sup> *Pelléas et Mélisande*, Act 1, scene 4, trans. Hugh Macdonald in *Pelléas and Mélisande: Claude Debussy* (London: Calder, 1982), pp. 47-8.

<sup>10</sup> That is to say, if 'Allemonde' is heard as 'alle monde'. The other pun contained in the name is 'Allemande' (German) which acquires an additional resonance in Debussy's opera in the context of the pro- and anti-German features of the work.



responding to Pelléas: as we learn in Act 2, Pelléas offers her the hope of love (a means of escape from the stifling existence in Allemonde, counterpointed by Pelléas's repeated threats of departure); but if we have registered the way in which the symbolic flowers are treated as an impediment, we will already suspect that Mélisande's reciprocation of this love will provide no escape. None of this is inaccessible to Todorov's 'reader of a different era';<sup>11</sup> on the contrary, Maeterlinck's meaning seems all too accessible both in the terms of the drama and as an existential parable. The sequence of images is a type of premonition, in which some fairly standard existential themes are elaborated. In my reading, these themes are structured A B A' {lights, ship, lights/flowers}, a structure that progresses internally by anaphoric sequence.

These features constitute one facet of the 'musical' condition of art articulated famously by Pater and pursued by Mallarmé. Symbolist literature is 'musical' by virtue of repetition, correspondences and the interminable, limitless, signifying chain, the basic fact of Piercian semiosis that Symbolism transforms into artistic fact, dramatising and enacting the world conceived as a system of signs.<sup>12</sup>

### *Correspondances*

4.2 The doctrine of *correspondances*, synonymous with Symbolism, served as its 'fundamental epistemological concept':<sup>13</sup>

The universe is composed of a certain number of analogous systems. The components of one system correspond (are linked in their essence and ultimate meaning) with the components of any other system. Through the use of symbols, the relationship between analogous systems is evoked.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Todorov, *Symbolism and Interpretation*, p. 89.

<sup>12</sup> Frantisek Deak comments that the Symbolists of the *Revue Wagnérienne* (especially Dujardin and Wyzewa) conceived post-Wagnerian Symbolism as a "theatricalization" of all artistic genres'. Frantisek Deak, *Symbolist Theater: the formation of an avant-garde* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), p. 109.

<sup>13</sup> Deak, *ibid.*, p. 102.

<sup>14</sup> Deak, *ibid.*, p. 100.

This definition neatly presents correspondence as a coherent theory, although it underplays the degree to which Symbolism is a heuristic tradition: the epistemology is not fully formed (not, at least, as an a priori system) but must be discovered in the relations between elements from different 'systems'. In this sense, it is a fundamentally metalinguistic art of tropes, the construction of which, when it works, creates 'essence and ultimate meaning' (since the style is too easy to do badly and difficult to bring off, it can produce catachresis, or the merely obfuscatory and the vaguely poetic). Poetic creation in symbolism should therefore be revelation, and this accounts for its quasi-religious cast, its belief in the sacredness of art, and for Mallarmé's gnomic, gnosticist prose: *l'art pour l'art*.

Inspired by Swedenborg, Baudelaire assumed, and stated most explicitly in 'Correspondances' (§7.1), a world of relationality in which everything is reciprocal, supplying the poet with the 'inexhaustible resources of universal analogy'<sup>15</sup> in a finite world constituted by an apparently limitless multiplicity of corresponding significant. Two movements of signification are observable here, 'vertical' and 'horizontal' correspondence: the first is the movement of transcendence in which things and the world of physicality and facts are referred to spiritual realities; the second, *correspondances horizontales*, constitutes and elaborates finitude by observing, and stating, the attraction and differentiation of objects in a web of affinities.<sup>16</sup> As Bersani explains it, 'horizontal' correspondence is a compensation for the loss of the vertical: in effect, this expresses both the 'lack' on the part of the signifieds unveiled by Derrida and is the symptom of the Symbolist radicalisation of classical, pre-Enlightenment certainties. The transcendental dimensions of the world are circumscribed, but the loss of concepts of 'permanent design' — the death of God, in a phrase — 'sets phenomena free for relations now wholly unconstrained',<sup>17</sup> which is to say, for the deconstructed signifier to take the place of the transcendental signified of vertical *correspondance*. Thus, horizontal *correspondance* entails that 'design', any structure, is made potential and mobile, open to play and chance. This, I think, accounts for the fact that, essentially, Symbolism is a style of immense

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<sup>15</sup> Leo Bersani, *The Culture of Redemption* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), p. 75.

<sup>16</sup> See Bersani, *ibid.*, p. 75, and Charles Chadwick, *Symbolism* (London: Methuen, 1971), p. 14.

<sup>17</sup> Bersani, *ibid.*, p. 75.

refinement and attention to detail, as we know from sources as (geographically) diverse as Poe and Mallarmé where it is clear that poetry is made from language not ideas, and not even from words but from individual sounds, their repetitions and relations.

Baudelaire, Poe, Rimbaud, Pater, the *Revue wagnérienne*, Mallarmé, and Valéry agree that Symbolism is an inherently musical tradition, but one in which 'music' is installed in and through literature. Poetry is therefore a fundamentally sonic art (Verlaine: 'de la musique avant toute chose').<sup>18</sup> A Symbolist Wagner is the source: Wagner as writer, poet-dramatist, and prose-poet/analyst of Beethoven (a compliment repaid by Baudelaire and Huysmans, in poetic analyses of the overture to *Tannhäuser*) and the *fons et origo* of modernity; the *Gesamtkunstwerk* is interpreted as synesthetic;<sup>19</sup> the *Leitmotiv* (later demoted to the status of a 'calling card' by Debussy)<sup>20</sup> is, for the Symbolist theoretician, the ultimate musical symbol susceptible to variation and restatement (the model, perhaps, for Baudelaire and Mallarmé's limited repertoire of symbols, repeated with various signifiers); and the sensuous surfaces of *Lohengrin*, *Tannhäuser* (in particular, as art about art), *Tristan* and *Parsifal* are paradigmatic. Wagner is the Symbolist's Symbolist, and the *leitmotiv* is the Symbolist's symbol.

**4.3** Because Moréas's prescription is specifically literary there is no overt consideration of time, the musical medium. The Symbolist's assumption that the world is a network, a signifying sphere, entails that temporal relations are subordinated to relations in space, and that the presence of time in a work is largely restricted to an extended or suspended present in which the past and future are sustained in the imagination, itself confined to the present moment. Their preferred genre, lyric poetry, maximises its strength, its distillation of thought and emotion in an ideal present that seems independent of time, even though nostalgia (the past) and hope (the future) are among its fundamental themes. Only in

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<sup>18</sup> Paul Verlaine, 'Art poétique' [1882], *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Jacques Borl (Paris: Gallimard, 1962), p. 326.

<sup>19</sup> Deak argues that the *Gesamtkunstwerk* and the doctrine of *correspondance* are opposed in Symbolism, primarily because theatre is representational. There is no doubt, though, that the synesthesia common to both concepts constituted an initial attraction, analysed and transcended by the contributors to the *Revue wagnérienne* (1885-7). See *Symbolist Theater*, p. 102.

<sup>20</sup> Claude Debussy, *Debussy on Music*, ed. and trans. Richard Langham Smith (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), p. 80.

prose, and in the prose poem (the most characteristic Symbolist genre), does the experience of time, in the form of narrative, inevitably participate in the structure of a text. The striking thing about Symbolist prose is its proximity to the poetic, that is to say, its transfer of the essentially poetic doctrine of *correspondances* to a discursive medium (as, for example, in Mallarmé's *The Demon of Analogy*); and it is possible that the prose poem provided the unique genre in which to elaborate *correspondances* in the temporal dimension while not relinquishing the spatial relations fully developed in the lyric. In this sense, the prose poem's colonisation of time continues the progress toward the ideal, 'musical' condition of art. These features are prominently displayed in the opening paragraphs of T  odor de Wyzewa's essay-manifesto on Symbolist music,<sup>21</sup> the second of which is a prose poem about music, and, synesthetically, a musical text in words:

La vie humaine, que l'Art Wagn  rienne doit recrer, est faite d'  l  ments en apparence tr  s divers, mais issus tous de la sensation, et produisant, dans leur complexit   croissante, les deux modes de la notion et de l'  motion. L'art plastique recree les sensations; l'art litt  raire recree les notions [...]. Mais les   motions les plus subtiles et les plus profondes sont recr   es, seulement, par un art sp  cial, incapable de toute autre destination; par la Musique.

Dans le grand parc mondain et joli, par les soir  es chaudes quelque r  veur s'attarde sur un banc, tandis que les arbres, au loin, cisellent de noires images vacillantes le spectacle   toil   du ciel, et que passent enlac  s, ou bien s'assoient, les couples   l  giaques. L'  me du r  veur per  oit le jeu mobile des lumi  res, les bruits des paroles, l  -bas, et les mares   clatantes — cercl  es   trangement d'une verdure sombre, — les mares de blancheur   tal  es au sol par le jet des lampes   lectriques. Elle voit sautiller, dans les all  es, quelques fr  les enfants tr  s gracieux. Et comme il n'a point l'esprit occup      d'autres pens  es, le r  veur se rappelle d'enfantines journ  es   vanouies. Mains hasards de sa vie, qui jadis lui avaient paru indiff  rents, il les revoit, et leur suite logique. Mais bient  t les souvenirs affluent; ils se m  lent et affluent: c'est des tron  ons de faits anciens, des visions t  nues et innombrables; comme la secousse joyeuse d'un large flot qui s'  l  ve, et qui l'envahit. Les sensations, tout    l'heure per  ues nettement, se joignent    cette mar  e tumultueuse d'id  es. Il   prouve un bonheur fi  vreux, quelque rapide grandissement de soi, dans cette vie   voqu  e, et qu'il revit. Alors le rythme de ses images s'acc  l  re: elle tournoient maintenant, tournoient

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<sup>21</sup> T  odor de Wyzewa, 'Notes sur la musique Wagn  rienne', *Revue Wagn  rienne*, Vol. 2 (1886), pp. 183-93, 259-68.

sans arrêt devant lui: une allégresse montante, haletante, éperdue. Puis, sous une réflexion soudaine, le beau rêve est changé: ces âges délicieux, oui, ils sont lointains, désormais finis. Par degrés les sensations et les notions sont décolorées: la création des images s'apaise: un voile couvre la folle danse, ralentie. Le rêveur perçoit mieux les bruits du parc; il les perçoit imprégnés d'une méchante tristesse. Il souffre, et voici que sont dissipés et fuient les derniers tourbillons des souvenirs. Un vide cruel, dans l'âme. Et voici revenus les raisonnements habituels, le rêveur regarde, réfléchit; son ÉMOTION a disparu.

L'émotion est ainsi un état très instable et très rare de l'esprit: elle est un rapide afflux d'images, de notions, un afflux si dense et tumultueux que l'âme n'en peut discerner les éléments, toute à sentir l'impression totale.

Human life, which Wagnerian Art must recreate, is made of elements very diverse in appearance, but which all issue from sensation, and in their increasing complexity produce two modes, thought [*notion*] and emotion. Plastic art recreates sensations; literary art recreates thoughts [...] But the most subtle and profound emotions are recreated only by a special art unsuited to any other purpose [*destination*], [that is to say] by Music.

In the great park, social and pleasant, in warm evenings a dreamer lingers on a bench, while trees in the distance chisel dark vacillating images from the starry spectacle of the sky, and elegiac couples pass by arm-in-arm or perhaps sit down. The soul of the dreamer perceives the mobile play of lights, sounds of voices, [and] further down, sparkling ponds — strangely encircled by a deep greenness — ponds of whiteness displayed [as if] in the sun by shafts of electric lamplight. This soul sees some fragile, very graceful children leaping in the avenues. And since his mind is not occupied with other thoughts, the dreamer recalls his vanished childhood days. Many incidents in his life, to which he had been indifferent, come back to him in logical succession. But soon the memories flow; they combine and flow: these are parts of old events [*faits*], innumerable persistent images [*visions*]; like the joyous surge [*secousse*] of a large mounting wave which overcomes him. The sensations, experienced immediately and all at once [*nettement*], join this tumultuous flood of ideas. He feels a feverish happiness, a rapid enlargement of the self, in this evoked life which he relives. Then the rhythm of images accelerates: they swirl now, swirl in front of him without stopping: a mounting joy, breathless, lost. Then, with sudden awareness [*réflexion*], the beautiful dream is changed: these sweet times — yes, they are far off — ended long ago. Gradually sensations and ideas lose their colour: the creation of images subsides: a veil covers the mad dance, which slows down. The dreamer perceives the sounds of the park more clearly; they seem to be impregnated with a menacing sadness. He suffers, and this is when the last eddies of memory

dissipate and flee. A cruel emptiness of the soul. And then the familiar rational thoughts come back, the dreamer looks around, reflects; his *emotion* has disappeared.

Emotion is thus a very unstable and unusual state of mind: it is a rapid influx of images and thoughts, an influx so condensed and tumultuous that the soul cannot discern its elements, but only feel the impression as a whole.<sup>22</sup>

Wyzewa's parable of *correspondance* describes a bourgeois arcadia. In elaborating this world view, Wyzewa defines a moment in the mature (soon to be decadent) phase of Symbolist writing in which its practitioners and critics seek a definition of the Symbolist practice of the originators. Wyzewa, like all the Symbolists, affirms the empiricist's primacy of sensation<sup>23</sup> which produces thought and emotion. The uninterpreted world is a multiplicity that resolves, through perception, into this binary pair (in French this opposition is also a nascently poetic feature of language: *notion/émotion*). Painting (evoking sensation) is the most primitive art, literature (recreating ideas) the most discursive. Music performs the higher, 'special' function of overcoming the binary product of sensation, not by a retreat to the original multiplicity but by uniting the two, as emotion. 'Emotion' is therefore the product of this elementary type of *correspondance*, the combination of elements from different worlds or systems; as an 'unstable' state of mind that can only be experienced undivided, it also stands as the sign of the 'infinite', the 'mystery' that Mallarmé defined as the object of art. Furthermore, 'emotion' seems to be Wyzewa's counterpart to Mallarmé's 'Idea' (*Idéal*), logically undefinable and beyond rational thought (Wyzewa's *notion*) or simple perceivable forms.<sup>23a</sup> Thus, 'emotion' has little in common with the passive experience of emotion in its pure state (for example, the Cartesian 'passions of the soul'), but it is not active either since it is not an aspect of will. Stimulated by the external (sensations), Wyzewa's 'emotion' seems to come from elsewhere, an experience of otherness produced by combination, and from a higher synthesis of thought and feeling that produces a new, unfamiliar experience, personal, yet in its otherness, universal.

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<sup>22</sup> Wyzewa, *ibid.*, pp. 183-4.

<sup>23</sup> There is no satisfactory equivalent in English for the French *sensation* in this context. The term should be understood here as 'perception' in the philosophical sense, as the sense-data that produce elementary affective responses (as in painting, in Wyzewa's view).

<sup>23a</sup> Contrary to popular critical assumption, Idea is not identical with the Platonic idea or ideal form since it is both real and difficult to access. See Michael Zimmermann, *'Träumerei eines französischen Dichters': Stéphane Mallarmé und Richard Wagner* (Munich: Katzschler, 1981), pp. 13-23.

Wyzewa seems to be aiming at some such metaphysics. Even a gloss can only be as indefinite and approximate as the definition itself. Wyzewa supplements this failure of description by enacting *correspondance* and emotion in the scenario which both defines and demonstrates the processes of the model given in the first and third paragraphs. Enactment as a poetic device was a familiar move in 1886 (Wyzewa's time of writing), almost an article of faith, which we recognise now in the classic Symbolist texts analysed below, where *correspondance* is the subject demonstrated by the figurative virtuosity of the poetic technique. But since Wyzewa is replicating this move in prose, he relies on analogy and narrative description, which (while the paragraph is of no great artistic value) manages to encapsulate the traditional Symbolist techniques and to state metaphysical positions developed philosophically by Bergson in the following decade (§4.4-§4.6).

A primordial *correspondance* is established by the mimesis of sky and earth. The starry sky is replicated in the image of the sparkling ponds (the parenthesis specifies their star-like 'estrangement' from the darker background of the grass): both images reflect the light of a 'sun', the stars naturally, the ponds as projected <sup>by</sup> the lamplight ('electric lamplight' is specified to establish the modernity of the Symbolist movement, its special concentration on *correspondance* as a universal fact). This mirroring of heaven and earth forms a kind of unity, a correspondence of the mirror and the mirrored, so that the connection of two distinct regions defines distance in space (and in time, if the eternity of the stars is contrasted with the impermanent light of streetlamps), within which the dreamer is placed. Wyzewa recasts a conventional symbol here, one which Mallarmé had elaborated as the structure of 'Soupir' (1864). In the narrative, these two images are separated by the 'elegiac couples', arm-in-arm like thought and feeling combined in emotion: they are 'elegiac' because, as we learn later, emotion draws significantly on memory. Wyzewa demonstrates Meltzer's observation that literary Symbolism relies heavily on the association of objects (their *correspondance*) through their properties (grammatically speaking, through adjectives): he obliges here with an opposition, the modernity of the present ('electric lamplight') and the fondly remembered past ('elegiac couples'). The resulting correspondence (lamplight and couples) is unconvincing, perhaps unintentional,

but through the adjectival opposition Wyzewa projects further into the text the idea of temporal distance (present and past, introduced earlier as eternity and impermanence). This installs, in the scenario, the temporal ground of 'emotion' developed in the next sentence.

A second symbol completes the scenario. The 'fragile, graceful children', perceptions and sensations awaiting the activating power of memory, are also the trigger of memory itself ('the dreamer recalls his vanished childhood days'): thus symbol becomes signifier, and takes on a narrative function. Multiple functions of the image, as here, distinguish the symbol from the sign: the symbol requires interpretation (and is therefore a multiplicity at source) while the sign is 'motivated' (connected by imitation or convention to its signified).<sup>24</sup> Wyzewa's central role of memory, and his description of its processes, are the precursor of the 'involuntary memory' of Bergson and Proust which occupies mental space when, like Wyzewa's dreamer, the mind is in a receptive state, 'not occupied with other thoughts'. Emphasis on forgotten details, and the re-enactment of the past in the present, defines this common ground; and the specification of a 'logical succession [*suite logique*]' refers, somewhat obliquely, to contemporary associationist theories of mind — 'logical', because memory-processes were defined (and continued to be defined in Proust) by the 'logical' operations of similarity and contiguity (and their combination). Once Wyzewa's dreamer is overcome by emotion, he feels a 'rapid enlargement of the self'. The unity through *correspondance* is achieved, a unity of past and present, sensation and thought, that Bergson made fundamental to the experience of 'pure duration' [*durée*] which he often described as a psychological expansion, a phenomenological fact 'in which the ego lets itself *live*'.<sup>25</sup>

When *correspondance* ceases to occur as an active, involuntary mental process, emotions subside, lose their colour, and eventually disappear, leaving 'a cruel emptiness of the soul'. Without the synthetic relationality of *correspondance* signification and meaning evaporate; external and psychological facts remain, although even these are now absent in

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<sup>24</sup> See Todorov, *Symbolism and Interpretation*, pp. 16-17, 73.

<sup>25</sup> Henri Bergson, *Time and Freewill: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness* [1889], trans. F. L. Pogson (London: Allen and Unwin, 1910), p. 100. Italics in the original.



the text itself (the emptiness of the soul is symbolised by emptiness in the scenario). The return of rationality kills emotion and signification. Wyzewa's metaphor, 'emotions lose their colour', the absence of a property, means that the bleached sensations lose their ability to correspond mutually and with the past. This choice of metaphor again conforms to the dominance of colour in Symbolist poetry as the primary agent for the correspondence of objects, often described as 'musical' by analogy with music's capacity for self reference. (Gauguin: 'think of the musical role that colour will play from now on in modern painting. Colour, which like music is vibration, is capable of attaining what in nature is most universal and consequently most elusive — namely its internal force'.)<sup>26</sup> This reciprocity of music and emotion is a primary correspondence basic to their special relationship, one which is extended to inform the structure of the parable. Symbols and their correspondence are projected through the narrative, in the same way as motives, themes and harmonic complexes are projected in music. Wyzewa's dominant colour-image demonstrates this clearly. The shining whiteness of the moon and the electric lamps combines the functions of purity and illumination, so that this composite symbol of the receptive state of the dreamer contains both passivity (the soul as *tabula rasa*) and introduces the epiphany to come (active illumination). Activation of emotion is conveyed by bodily images (leaping children, the accelerating rhythm of images, swirling in a 'mad dance', becoming breathless, and so on), but essentially, we are told in retrospect, this physicality is characterised by the colours lost when emotion subsides, a return to whiteness, absence of colour, and a 'cruel emptiness'. Thus, the progression {white (light) - colour - white (absence)} forms a structure, one which symbolises the progression {mental receptivity - emotion - emptiness of the soul}, a 'ternary' narrative structure (A B A') in which A' is a varied repetition of A (receptivity and emptiness are not identical), not unlike a sonata-form recapitulation, and identical with the structure of the passage from Maeterlinck's *Pelléas* analysed above (§4.1). The structure of the parable is evolutionary,

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<sup>26</sup> Quoted in Jarocinski, *Debussy*, p. 38. See also Françoise Meltzer, 'Color as cognition in Symbolist verse', *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 5 (1978), pp. 253-73.

in the sense that each formal unit implies its successor according to the rhythm of emotion and the implications of its symbols.

Beyond this, though, Wyzewa demonstrates the double movement of *correspondance*, the horizontal correspondence of elements within a discourse or experience, and the vertical correspondence with the external world that constitutes its semantic dimension (Debussy: music is 'not confined to reproducing, more or less exactly, Nature, but the mysterious correspondences which link Nature with Imagination').<sup>27</sup> This 'double movement' recapitulates Mallarmé's theoretical distinction between the relations of signifiers and the mimetic *correspondance* of signifier and signified (the latter is known as Cratylism; §7.4). In literary practice, both Mallarmé and Wyzewa seek to erase this distinction, at least to unite both movements in a single text: there is a movement from signifier to signifier (for example from the property of one object to the property of another), but there is also a correspondence of signifier and signified (for example, between Imagination and Nature). But because both these movements are reciprocal, the signifier-signified relation can be reversed, and this entails that the question of origins and destinations is problematised. While, in the past, signification was assumed to be at an end once the signified had been 'attained' (the signified was therefore both the ground and the goal, the alpha and omega, of signification), the reciprocity of Symbolism does away with such teleology in favour of a network with no centre or extremities — as it were, a signifying sphere.

Wyzewa argues later that music, the art of 'the most subtle and profound emotions', is privileged because of its uniquely direct semantic access, a special feature predicated on its innate self-referentiality, using (as Mallarmé eloquently analysed it) signifiers unencumbered by (culturally) pre-determined signifieds. Wyzewa's parable pivots on this double movement: sensations and thought lack meaning until they are impelled to correspond, and when they do the semantic level is constituted *as the experience itself*. It is not difficult to decode Wyzewa's symbolisation of this experience: the experiencing subject, the 'dreamer', is a listener (a passive perceiver whose mind is activated by an

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<sup>27</sup> *Comoedia-Charpentier*, 18 October 1941. Quoted in Jarocinski, *Debussy*, p. 96.

external stimulus); the scenario ('social and pleasant') is a concert hall. The experience of emotion, then, is a 'musical' experience. Wyzewa's parable, considered in its context, is an enactment of the experience of music in which the ternary structure defines a temporal progression (not a 'spatial' organisation of ideas as in Maeterlinck and Baudelaire), and the past (as memory) is installed as a vital component of the present musical experience.

### ***Bergson 1***

**4.4** The musicalisation of literature in Wyzewa is accompanied by a comparable philosophical trope in Bergson. In *Time and Freewill* (1889), Bergson defines the purpose of art as follows:

The object of art is to put to sleep the active, or rather resistant, powers of our personality, and thus bring us into a state of perfect responsiveness, in which we realise the idea that is suggested to us and sympathise with the feeling that is expressed.<sup>28</sup>

Although this statement conforms to a Romantic aesthetic, it contains the essential Symbolist, Mallarméan development of Romanticism concerned less with the expression than with the 'suggestion' of the Idea. Music is the definitive art of suggestion: 'if musical sounds affect us more powerfully than sounds of nature, the reason is that nature confines itself to expressing feelings whereas music suggests them to us'.<sup>29</sup> In this, Bergson recapitulates the Symbolist rejection of the concept of art (and specially music) as imitation, as argued in Wyzewa's manifesto published during the writing of *Time and Freewill*. Imitation and realism are primitive stages of art, and music is the emotional art *par excellence*:

To translate emotion using precise words [...] is to decompose emotion, and thus to destroy it. Emotion [...] cannot be translated directly, but only *suggested*. To suggest the emotions, the subtle mode and ultimate [form] of life, a special sign has been invented: the musical sound.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Bergson, *Time and Freewill*, p. 14.

<sup>29</sup> Bergson, *ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>30</sup> Wyzewa, 'Notes', p. 186. My italics.

In Bergson, this capacity for suggestion arises primarily from the repetition of a bodily experience (the 'motion and attitude which sound imparts to the body') from which the musician or listener is transported back to the originary psychic state which, crucially, the new bodily experience now *suggests* to the listener, but which 'nothing can express'.<sup>31</sup> Secondly, Bergson describes the processes of art as 'a refined and in some measure spiritualized version of the processes commonly used to induce the state of hypnosis',<sup>32</sup> producing similar states of 'perfect responsiveness'. Musical suggestion is an effect achieved primarily through rhythm and repetition which, of all the arts, music embodies most completely. In music, rhythm and metre suspend 'the normal flow of our sensations and ideas by causing our attention to swing to and fro between fixed points'<sup>33</sup> as if lulled by the hypnotist's pendulum.

Music is also the best expression of 'pure duration' (*durée*). Bergson's presentation of *durée* therefore habitually uses music as the example, particularly what he calls the 'image' of a melody (a consistent trope in Bergson's work from the mid 1880s onwards, with no significant development or increase in depth).<sup>34</sup> Melody is the figure of movement in space and time,<sup>35</sup> and of psychology ('there is simply the continuous melody our inner life'):<sup>36</sup> its content is essentially indivisible and, consequently, the illusory reality of past and future. Thus, melody is the figure of the perpetual present and of perpetual becoming.<sup>37</sup> In brief, this is Bergson's concept of 'real duration', the famous category of *durée*, 'time' itself. When it is the subject rather than a figure, music is always considered only in terms of duration, motion, and 'psychic rhythm'; furthermore, it is usually invoked to exemplify the delusion of spatial conceptions of time, and thus to demonstrate, sometimes explicitly, the illusory

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<sup>31</sup> Bergson, *Time and Freewill*, p. 44.

<sup>32</sup> Bergson, *ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>33</sup> Bergson, *ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>34</sup> See, for example, 'Introduction to metaphysics' [1903], and 'The perception of change'[1911], in *The Creative Mind*, trans. Mabelle L. Andison (New York: Philosophical Library, 1946), pp. 159-200 and pp. 130-58.

<sup>35</sup> One of Bergson's fundamental theses is that space and time are not equivalent and are distinct.

<sup>36</sup> Bergson, *Time and Freewill*, p. 149.

<sup>37</sup> This notion has long been identified as a problem in Bergson since 'perpetual becoming' implies a lack of ontology, or completeness of being.

nature of analysis which (in Bergson's historically and technically limited view) is always in danger of believing its spatial metaphors and representations.

Bergson's conception of musical 'rhythm' is primitive, confined either to the mechanical regularity of simple metre, or more weakly still, to undifferentiated repetition. Melody, however, represents the fundamental difference between *temps espace* — 'a fourth dimension of space which we call homogeneous time',<sup>38</sup> time conceived as a metaphor of space, and therefore non-identically with it — and *durée* ('real duration', or the true nature of time as 'multiplicity'). The effect of an oscillating pendulum (another recurrent image) can be explained with reference to melody: either each oscillation is perceived as independent, in which case one is 'condemned to remain forever in the present', or the recollection of each oscillation is retained with the present one so that each permeates the other, 'organising themselves like the notes of a tune'.<sup>39</sup> Sounds combined in succession affect us by 'the rhythmic organisation of the whole': 'each increase of stimulation [...] produces on us the effect of a musical phrase, constantly on the point of ending, and constantly altered in its totality by the addition of some new note'.<sup>40</sup> This is an image of *durée*, which arises 'when our ego lets itself *live*'. It does not set out successive conscious states in a line but 'forms both the past and the present states into an organic whole, as happens when we recall the notes of a tune, melting so to speak into one another'.<sup>41</sup> Motion, therefore, is a 'gradual organisation of our successive sensations, a unity resembling that of a [linguistic] phrase or melody'.<sup>42</sup>

A new simile in the 'Introduction to metaphysics' (1903), expresses this concept rather more clearly:

there is, on the one hand, a *multiplicity* of successive states of consciousness and, on the other, a *unity* which binds them together. Duration will be the 'synthesis' of this unity and multiplicity [...]. To make certain of what we mean, if we take duration under the simple aspect of a movement being accomplished in space and if we try to reduce to concepts movements considered representative of time, we shall have on the

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<sup>38</sup> Bergson, *Time and Freewill*, p. 109.

<sup>39</sup> Bergson, *ibid.*, p. 105.

<sup>40</sup> Bergson, *ibid.*, pp. 105-6.

<sup>41</sup> Bergson, *ibid.*, p. 100.

<sup>42</sup> Bergson, *ibid.*, p. 111.

one hand and desired number of points on the trajectory, and on the other hand an abstract unity joining them, like the thread holding together the beads of a necklace.<sup>43</sup>

This sharper spatial 'image' of the necklace has a striking resemblance to Debussy's Mussorgsky metaphor of 1901, a remarkable description — in which 'Debussy describes himself'<sup>44</sup> — that restates the Bergsonian opposition of synchronic ('beads', 'minute touches') and diachronic ('thread') conceptions of time:

Never has a more refined sensibility been conveyed by such simple means [...] the form [...] depends on and is made up of successive minute touches linked by a mysterious thread [*un lien mystérieux*] and by a gift for enlightened clairvoyance.<sup>45</sup>

'Real duration' is a synthesis of synchronic and diachronic, an erasure of the opposition graspable only in metaphor, beyond analysis,<sup>46</sup> so that conceptually duration is 'always brought back to the indefinable combination of the multiple and the one'.<sup>47</sup> Debussy's prose metaphor seems to function similarly to Bergson's necklace-image which asserts the analytical importance of metaphor and figural language in general. The necklace is a synthesising concept of the 'two opposite points of view', the beads and the thread (which express the analytic decomposition of the figure); and the combination of the multiple and the one is indefinable because without instants and continuity there is no duration (without beads or thread there is no necklace).

On this simple ground Bergson begins to elaborate the temporal ontology synonymous with Bergsonism. Number or quantity, the definitive feature of space, is displaced in *durée* by a succession of qualitative changes which 'melt into and permeate one another, without precise outlines, without any tendency to externalise

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<sup>43</sup> Bergson, 'Introduction to Metaphysics', pp. 184-5.

<sup>44</sup> Alain Poirier, 'Histoire toujours recommencée: introduction à la pensée analytique de Jean Barraqué', *Analyse musicale*, No. 12 (1988), p. 9.

<sup>45</sup> Debussy, 'The Nursery, poem and music by M. Moussorgsky', *La revue blanche*, 15 April 1901, *Monsieur Croche the Dilettante Hater*, trans. B. N. Langdon Davies, in *Three Classics in the Aesthetics of Music* (New York: Dover, 1962), p. 19. Translation modified.

<sup>46</sup> 'Only intuition [...] can provide sympathetic entry into the interiority of the object', for example, a melody or structure, 'which is blocked by intellectual analysis, linguistic symbolization and visual representation'. Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), p. 202.

<sup>47</sup> Bergson, 'Introduction to metaphysics', p. 185.

themselves in relation to one another, without any affiliation with number'.<sup>48</sup> A surprising and original conclusion follows. Time, as *durée*, is conceived as a *heterogeneous* succession of qualitative changes, a succession of instants as pure difference. This is the philosophical import of Jankélévitch's 'the mystery of the instant', a non-developmental, non-organic concentration on events. A Bergsonian understanding of larger musical units (larger, that is, than the single event — a note, for example) would have to be as an expanded 'moment', whose internal organisation could be described as mobility within stasis (Jankélévitch's oxymoron is 'vélocité stationnaire').<sup>49</sup> Considered semiotically, the import of this argument is that the musical signifier, the 'expanded moment', is a blended event, like the phonemic structure of the word, existing (like the word) in a temporal dimension constituted as multiplicity of heterogeneous events, in which relations can be sought but are not inherent.

On the other hand, an analysis of *durée*, as melody, is spatial in Bergson: 'from the moment when you attribute the least *homogeneity* to duration, you surreptitiously introduce space'.<sup>50</sup> 'Homogeneity' here means not only isolating the single event, but grouping events as sequences; implicitly, then, any grouping hierarchy already infects analysis spatially. Because melody and duration are essentially undivided, the notes of melody 'may be compared to a living being whose parts, although distinct, permeate one another'.<sup>51</sup> Thus:

we can conceive of succession without distinction, and think of it as musical penetration, an interconnection and organisation of elements, each one of which represents the whole, and cannot be isolated from it except by abstract thought. Such is the account of duration which would be given by a being who was ever the same and ever changing, and who had no idea of space.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Bergson, *ibid.*, p. 104.

<sup>49</sup> Vladimir Jankélévitch, *Debussy et le mystère de l'instant* (Paris: Plon, 1976), p. 130.

<sup>50</sup> Bergson, 'Introduction to metaphysics', p. 104. My italics.

<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, if the duration of any note is distorted 'a qualitative change [is] thereby caused in the whole of a musical phrase'. Bergson, *ibid.*, p. 100.

<sup>52</sup> Bergson, *ibid.*, p. 100.

The heterogeneity of *durée* has therefore to do with the multiplicity of events and their essential unrelatedness; *durée* appears to be homogeneous only because we group units of time into larger durational segments, or misunderstand 'homogeneous' as a synonym for 'continuous'. Bergson does not discuss explicitly the fact that music proceeds in durational spans (when one melody or one statement of it is complete, another follows). What attracted Bergson in music and made him deaf to its unit-structure was Wagner's 'progressive continuity' divided only into scenes and acts.<sup>53</sup> Thus, although Bergson found the image of *durée* in a musical category, it should not be assumed that Bergson thought that all music exemplifies *durée*: music is, as it were, a temporal metalanguage that could be infected with implicit or explicit spatial images. This leaves open the possibility of a '*durée*-tional' music, a music made in Bergson's image of melody, like that suggested in Debussy's 'one continuous "motif" which nothing interrupts',<sup>54</sup> or in Jankélévitch's metaphors: both reveal at least the impulse toward projecting Bergsonian heterogeneity beyond the confines of melody to the structure of the musical work as a whole.

As it stands, though, *durée* does promote a particular way of hearing, a 'structural hearing' of undivided duration in which the blending of unit-boundaries is fundamental:

When we listen to a melody we have the purest impression of succession we could possibly have — an impression as far removed as possible from that of simultaneity — and yet it is the very continuity of the melody and the impossibility of breaking it up which make that impression upon us. If we cut it up into distinct notes, into so many 'befores' and 'afters', we are bringing spatial images into it and impregnating the succession with simultaneity: in space, and only in space, is there a clear-cut distinction of parts external to one another. [...] We have no interest in listening to the uninterrupted humming of life's depths. And yet, that is where real duration is.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> In 1910 Bergson reviewed Lionel Dauriac's *Le musicien poète R. Wagner: Étude de psychologie musicale* (Paris: Fischbacher, 1908). Part of Bergson's gloss on Dauriac's argument runs as follows: 'Each of us, hearing a Wagner opera, has the feeling of being involved with a drama in music. [...] But each of us also feels that he is in the presence of a tragedy which surpasses itself in some way and which contains even more than it gives, of a *progressive continuity* [*continuité en marche*] which presents itself to us, in the various dramatic scenes, only in *discontinuous stages*'. Henri Bergson, *Mélanges*, ed. André Robinet (Paris: PUF, 1972), p. 819. Italics in the original.

<sup>54</sup> Quoted in Jarocinski, *Debussy*, p. 103.

<sup>55</sup> Bergson, 'The perception of change', pp. 149-50.



Thus, in *Creative Evolution* (1907), Bergson declared that '*form is only a snapshot view of transition*'.<sup>56</sup> Succession will always imply division (parts) while duration will always imply the undivided whole. Since the whole is not predicated on relations of similar or opposed events but comprises an indefinable blend of its parts, *correspondances* are elevated here as the primary reality, transcending the event-structure of rationalist analysis, making Bergson's conception of both time and music fundamentally anti-structuralist and non-relational.

These concepts constitute the first strands of a complex web of resonance with Debussy's aesthetic. A Bergsonian hearing of Debussy would demand a non-teleological mode of listening, one that is not seduced merely by the existence of music in time as forward progression, but which can be heard as referring backwards, as it were in the future anterior ('this will have been'): this is powerfully suggestive for the Prelude to *Pélleas*, where the future anterior expresses the workings of Destiny syntactically (that is to say, structurally), the 'absent player', and the inner self of the characters of which they are only intermittently aware. More immediately, though, the similar move from analytical description to a higher metaphysical reality (Debussy's 'mysterious thread and 'enlightened clairvoyance'; Bergson's 'necklace' and the metaphysical self-installation in duration 'by an effort of intuition') reveals a mutual problem: how to communicate the ineffable without consolidating it in analytical categories. Aversion to conceptual reification is an important dimension of Symbolist suggestion of the ideal, transcendental reality, the *au-delà*: Bergson's distinction between the mundane (the habitually spatial, the empirical) and the true reality of experience regained in the re-cognition of phenomena, becomes in Debussy the rejection of 'analysis' and discursive models of musical form in favour of the verbally inexpressible (§2.2). Debussy subscribes to Bergson's conception of consciousness, the inner self ('a continuity of flow comparable to no other flowing I have ever seen [...], a succession of states each of which announces what follows and contains what precedes it').<sup>57</sup> His artistic challenge is to create analogues for these

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<sup>56</sup> Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. A. Mitchell (London: Macmillan, 1911), p. 319. Quoted in Jay, *Downcast Eyes*, p. 200. Bergson's italics.

<sup>57</sup> Bergson, 'Introduction to Metaphysics', p. 163

movements of the inner self, to individuate the work from Bergson's analysis of a universal phenomenological 'fact', in effect, to substantiate Bergson's dictum that '*philosophy is the genus of which the different arts are the species*':<sup>58</sup> Thus, the particular 'Bergsonian' features in Debussy may be signs of Bergsonian universals.

**4.5** Documentary evidence for a conjunction of Bergson and Debussy is slender, and records of Debussy's contact with Bergson are (to my knowledge) non-existent, but the prospect of Debussy/Bergson as a historical trope is so tantalising that correspondences are frequently asserted, even in the absence of evidence in Debussy's articles or letters of any direct experience of Bergson's thought.<sup>59</sup> In 1914 two notable items appeared, *King Albert's Book*<sup>60</sup> and Laloy's 'La musique chez soi: M. Henri Bergson et la musique',<sup>61</sup> the first providing circumstantial evidence of a fortuitous connection,<sup>62</sup> the second the profoundly suggestive claim that there are 'secret correspondences' between them. So 'secret', and so obvious, that they can only belong to the *Zeitgeist*:

Bergson's philosophy has repeatedly been associated with the Maeterlinck's dramas, with their hinting at mysterious forces which tragically and irresistibly shape human destinies; with Debussy's music; with Symbolist poetry; with Proust's novels in their depiction of the indestructible persistence of memory. Such associations are notoriously imprecise, as are all attempts to grasp and describe the leading trends in the mentality of an age; they are not useless, though, and are not necessarily arbitrary.<sup>63</sup>

The 'mentality of the age' may therefore be the only source for Debussy/Bergson.

Jarocinski notes the 'strong influence [of Impressionism and Symbolism] on Bergson's

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<sup>58</sup> Bergson, *Mélanges*, p. 843. Italics in the original.

<sup>59</sup> Indirect experience, however, could have come via Debussy's inclusion in the Mallarmé circle and through his friendship with Pierre Louÿs and Louis Laloy. Perhaps defeated by this lack of evidence, Lockspeiser makes a case for Gaston Bachelard, not Bergson, as the (next-generation) philosopher of *Debussysme*. See Edward Lockspeiser, *Debussy: His Life and Mind*, Vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), p. 208.

<sup>60</sup> 'It was [...] in *King Albert's Book*, published in London by the *Daily Telegraph*, that Debussy's *Berceuse héroïque* was first published. [...] The French painters were represented by Monet and the philosophers by Bergson'. Lockspeiser, *Debussy*, p. 208.

<sup>61</sup> Louis Laloy, 'La musique chez soi: M. Henri Bergson et la musique', *Comoedia*, 19 February 1914.

<sup>62</sup> Bergson's contribution concerns the 'héroïsme simple et sublime' of King Albert of the Belgians and contains no reference to music. See Bergson, *Mélanges*, pp. 1129-30.

<sup>63</sup> Leszek Kolakowski, *Bergson* (London: Fontana, 1985), p. 10.

philosophic thinking',<sup>64</sup> an influence equally strong, of course, on Debussy. There is no question of direct mutual influence: Debussy/Bergson is a historical, and therefore interpretive, reality of a more subtle and implicit order than, say, Wagner-Schopenhauer or Debussy-Maeterlinck; it is a cultural correspondence, a construct, susceptible to re-creation.

In 1910, however, Bergson stated his 'coincidence' with the Symbolists:

My book [*Time and Freewill*] dates in fact from 1889: the Symbolist movement began some years previously. The coincidence is strange. We, these poets and I, are mutually ignorant of one another though. Lately, however, I have felt a strong attraction to the works of Maeterlinck, especially the dramas. It has been pointed out to me [...] how much the music of Debussy and his school is a music of '*durée*', through its use of continuous melody [*la mélodie continue*] which accompanies and expresses the single, uninterrupted current of dramatic emotion. Besides, I have an instinctive predilection for Debussy's works.<sup>65</sup>

Here again Bergson isolates melody as the point of correspondence. But although the relation between 'continuous melody' and the music of *durée* is clear, *prima facie* the reference to melody would apply more accurately to Wagner. (Can *la mélodie continue* be translated as *unendliche Melodie*?) Reading Bergson now, post-Dahlhaus,<sup>66</sup> he seems to suggest musical prose, and not the unique melodic construction of *Pelléas*, the work strongly implied by his contiguous references to Maeterlinck and the 'current of dramatic emotion'. (Perhaps Bergson was thinking of the flute solos in the *Prélude à 'L'après-midi d'un faune'* or the striking image in Mélisande's unaccompanied song at the beginning of Act 3, where continuous melody is represented physically on stage by the length of her hair). The distinction to be made is that between music exemplifying Bergson's 'durational' melody in Wagner and Debussy's style developed, indirectly, as a response to it.

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<sup>64</sup> Jarocinski, *Debussy*, p. 67.

<sup>65</sup> Georges Aimel, 'Une heure chez Henri Bergson', in Bergson, *Mélanges*, p. 844.

<sup>66</sup> Carl Dahlhaus, *Between Romanticism and Modernism*, trans. Mary Whittall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980).

Despite Bergson's '~~inclination~~ predilection' for Debussy, the correspondence between the two is problematised by his insecure understanding of music in general. In 'The perception of change', twenty years after *Time and Freewill*, he wrote:

Let us listen to a melody, allowing ourselves to be lulled by it: do we not have the clear perception of a movement which is not attached to a mobile, of a change without anything changing? This change is enough, it is the thing itself. And even if it takes time, it is still indivisible; if the melody stopped sooner it would no longer be the same sonorous whole, it would be another, equally indivisible. We have, no doubt, a tendency to divide it and to picture, instead of the the uninterrupted continuity of melody, a juxtaposition of distinct notes [...].<sup>67</sup>

Bergson repeats his original prescription that we must allow ourselves 'to be lulled', and the (by now familiar) experience of music, of time, is not to be thought because it leads to analytic, spatialised thinking; Bergson therefore continues to argue for a synthesised undivided experience. (The necklace image is avoided here because it is spatial, a besetting problem in the illustration of *durée*, which can be understood only by intuition.) Both the idea and the musical image are problematic: they betray an unreflective, simplistic account of musical 'wholeness' ('if the melody stopped sooner [...] it would be another, equally indivisible'). Because Bergson is concerned primarily with the past-in-the-present, there is no place here for implication; and because truncation of the melody is permissible, there can be no concept of that other type of wholeness — structure — except as an analytical 'visual image'. Furthermore, he comes perilously close to asserting that melody (the figure of time) has no structure, since he downplays the role of repetition in melody — oddly, since if there is a category of 'pastness' in music it must be repetition. While Bergson expresses here a fundamental tenet of Symbolist aesthetics (the predisposition to hear a blended continuity rather than the equally prevalent schematic formal structures), this is inadequate when transposed to the theory of melody — especially to Debussian melody in which repetition is the most distinctive feature. Either Bergson's reception of Debussy is superficial, or he heard nothing but the Mussorgskian 'thread' in the succession of repetitions.

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<sup>67</sup> Bergson, 'The perception of change', pp. 147-8.

Although hearing is the privileged sense in Bergson, there are two major deficiencies in his concept of music — an undernourished theory of melody, and the relegation of musical repetition to the status of an effect of habitually spatialised thinking dependent on divisibility, in effect equating it with the oscillations of a pendulum. As it stands, 'melody' as a metaphor for *durée* seems ideal rather than actual: Bergsonian time does not intrinsically contain the properties (internal structure, implication-realisation, goal-directedness, and so on) even of the Wagnerian music to which Bergson refers; and *durée* is even less commensurate with the definitive features of the Austro-German style — spatially-conceived musical architecture and an ontology referring more to the future than to the past.

**4.6** The apparent originality of Bergson's position, however, is an effect of the success and influence of *Time and Freewill*. Many of its fundamental concepts are present (less rigorously argued) in contributions to the *Revue wagnérienne* (1885-7), together with the, by this time obligatory, primacy of music, which may be the stimulus for Bergson's sustaining metaphor for *durée*. Bergson's polarity of hetero- and homogeneity is prominent in Wyzewa, where it defines the relation of the quotidian ('a rather simple homogeneous state' of emotional life) and the expanding repertoire of refined artistic emotions, a 'state of more complex heterogeneity': 'nuances develop, emotions become more subtle; special joys and sorrows correspond to each moment'.<sup>68</sup> Bergson's innovation is to conceive homogeneity, not just as habit, but as spatial (even *temps espace* is a metaphor for the analytical and, in his view, relatively superficial experience of temporality). Homogeneity is dimensionally opposed to heterogeneity, the deeper reality of emotional life embodied in Bergson's metaphor of consciousness as 'an invisible musician'.<sup>69</sup>

In some respects, Wyzewa's technical account of music and heterogeneity is more advanced than that in Bergson's universalising theory. Defining the present and future

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<sup>68</sup> Wyzewa, 'Notes', p. 186.

<sup>69</sup> Bergson, *Time and Freewill*, p. 147.

state of 'Wagnerian' music, Wyzewa revisits the arguments of Rousseau's *Letter on French Music* and the *Essay on the Origin of Languages*. Like Rousseau, Wyzewa creates an originary myth but to a quite different end. Far from subscribing to Rousseau's notion of the emptiness of the harmonic sign in music,<sup>70</sup> he asserts that emotional heterogeneity produces a complementary heterogeneity of chords or harmony: thus, 'true harmony is the recognition, in each element [i.e. chord], of a distinct emotional meaning [*sens*]',<sup>71</sup> a full sign that might have been drawn from Rameau's affective aesthetic. Melody is 'a music that produces emotion by means of the relation of its elements', while chords 'have value [*valaient*] only through their relations and *mesure*,<sup>72</sup> and invest [the notes with] their own meanings [*significations*] independently of their place in the melody'.<sup>73</sup> The reciprocal complexity of emotional life and musical resources means that, through repeated association of, and within, the two domains, a vast repertoire of suggestion has become available: 'composers were always realists: they did not create new emotions; they recreated, more vividly [*vivantes*], the emotions that habitually pierced their souls'.<sup>74</sup>

Wyzewa's liberation of the musical signifier from the tyranny of the signified (the 'suggestive' power of the musical signifier creates more intense, and more refined, 'precise emotional values'), grounds a myth of *telos*: because 'the signs of art are only signs', their material reality can be dispensed with. The development of refined souls requires 'the attenuation of any intermediary between themselves and the soul of the artist',<sup>75</sup> as an escape from the intolerable intensity in the musical sign:

The hour is approaching when musical sounds will no longer be able to produce emotion if they are heard directly: their individual sonic character will prevent the soul from considering them as pure signs of the emotions. A new music will become

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<sup>70</sup> Rousseau elaborates this concept in the *Essay on the Origin of Languages*. See Paul de Man, *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism*, second edition (London: Methuen, 1983), pp. 127-30.

<sup>71</sup> Wyzewa, 'Notes', p. 186.

<sup>72</sup> Literally, in music, 'rhythm' or 'metre', but also 'weight' and, rarely, 'step' (or by extension, 'progression'). I have left this (perhaps intentionally) ambiguous term untranslated since, in the context, the most recondite meaning is the most convincing.

<sup>73</sup> Wyzewa, 'Notes', p. 186.

<sup>74</sup> Wyzewa, *ibid.*, p. 185.

<sup>75</sup> Wyzewa, *ibid.*, p. 186.

necessary, written, not played; suggesting emotion without the intermediary of heard sounds, [and] thus suggesting it better and more intimately.<sup>76</sup>

The final state of music is to be graphic, unheard and unplayed, communicating directly with a listening reader (no longer a public audience), a communion of souls corresponding via a secret language: 'the artist must use less condensed [*dense*, i.e. 'full'] signs [than before], forms of feeling differentiated more from the things they signify',<sup>77</sup> music for the Stendhalian 'happy few' capable of understanding 'the complex languages of counterpoint, and the nuances of phrasing [*accents*] and timbre'.<sup>78</sup> Through the precision of harmony (the correlation of a complex hierarchy of signs with a similar hierarchy of emotion), Wyzewa imagines a language of non-sonic signifiers, whose most refined meaning will reside in nuances and timbre. In this, Wyzewa gives a new twist to the received idea of *décadence*. The signs of his contemporaneous music (including Wagner's?) are too full, semiotic purity and precision are compromised by Wagnerian richness: musical language is therefore not exhausted, but overly complex, and remediable by a return to the (mythical) state of purity. In this call for an authentically Symbolist music, the German late Romantics of the near future are already *passé*, and expressionist atonality and neoclassicism are pre-scribed.

Wyzewa's views are implicit in Mallarmé's musical analogues for poetry, and in his dream of silence and the blank page as a semiotic goal. Mallarmé and Wyzewa provide the contextual background to Debussy's discovery of silence as a new expressive medium (even though Maeterlinck's discursive gaps were staring him in the face), and the suggestive properties of the single chord.<sup>79</sup> Quite obviously, too, the doctrine of *correspondance* looms large in Wyzewa; firstly, the correspondence of élite souls capable of recognising the heterogeneity taken up by Bergson as the 'hidden' reality of *durée*; secondly, the correspondence of elements (chords, nuances and timbre). In Bergson, *durée* is fundamentally a reality of *correspondance*, a 'musical penetration, and

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<sup>76</sup> Wyzewa, *ibid.*, p. 187.

<sup>77</sup> Wyzewa, *ibid.*, p. 186.

<sup>78</sup> Wyzewa, *ibid.*, p. 187.

<sup>79</sup> As recalled by René Peter in Roger Nichols, *Debussy Remembered* (London: Faber, 1992), pp. 125-6.

interconnection and organisation of elements, *each one of which represents the whole*,<sup>80</sup> accessible, ideally, by the 'élite' unchanging, ever-changing being with no idea of space, that is, a pure mind unencumbered by a distorting physicality (for example, Wyzewa's soon to be dispensable sonic signs). Bergson's originality lies in transferring *correspondance* from space (the realm of the senses) to time, and in establishing this transfer as the primary idealist reality. Bergson's analytical support for the Symbolist 'intuition' of the primacy of music (derived from and sustained by the fashionability of Schopenhauer) provides the crucial missing link between, in poetry, the musicality of verse theorised and practiced by Baudelaire and Mallarmé and, in music, Debussy's Symbolist practice.

Thus, a simple equation: if Time (*durée*) is the real, then music, the temporal medium is, radically, the embodiment of the real in art.

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<sup>80</sup> Bergson, *Time and Freewill*, p. 100. My italics.



## 5: Rhizomes

**5.1** After Baudelaire, 'Wagner' is rethought and deconstructed. If Symbolist music was to take up the challenge of validating the theoretical manifestos, it would also be obliged carve out a new mode within music itself: the poetic theorists had already appropriated its features (in their Wagnerian cast) as the model for verse in order to reclaim for literature the abstraction they prized in (and prised from) music.<sup>1</sup> Debussy, like Mallarmé, responded by attending to detail. Since it is not a ideological art, music could not proceed directly from the individual sound to sense, yet it could at least replicate the sonic relationality of Symbolist poetry, and install this in music as a structural feature.

The most elaborate and sophisticated image of structure as a network of internal consistencies belongs to Deleuze and Guattari's Bergsonian conceptualisation of it as 'musical':

Music has always sent out lines of flight, like so many 'transformational multiplicities', even overturning the very codes that structure or arborify it; that is why musical form, right down to its ruptures and proliferations, is comparable to a weed, a rhizome....<sup>2</sup>

... By placing all its components in continuous variation, music itself becomes a super-linear system, a rhizome instead of a tree, and enters the service of a virtual cosmic continuum of which even holes, silences, ruptures and breaks are a part.<sup>3</sup>

'Rhizome'<sup>4</sup> informs their concept of the structures of thought and semiotic systems, is constructed conceptually as a biological image of music, and complements (perhaps

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<sup>1</sup> See Daniel Michael Hertz, *The Tuning of the Word: The Musico-Literary Poetics of the Symbolist Movement* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1987), p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, pp. 11-12.

<sup>3</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *ibid.*, p. 95.

<sup>4</sup> Rhizome: literally an underground stem (for example, bulbs and tubers) with multiple secondary roots, and metaphorically opposed to the tree and tree structures, 'a multiplicity that cannot be understood in terms of the traditional problems of the One and the Many [the 'tree' and its branches], of origins and genesis [organicism: 'from seed to plant'], or of deep structures [primarily Chomsky], in which any point can be connected to any other point, and any sequence of elements broken at any juncture'. Ronald Bogue, *Deleuze and Guattari* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 125.

simply restates) Derrida's 'structurality' of structure: a rhizome both encompasses the consistency and balance essential to any structure, and takes account of all that escapes structure (Derrida's elements of play, for example) by balancing the spatial metaphor of structure with a temporal metaphor — continuity. Thus, a rhizome is opposed to 'modern methods for generating a series, linear for example, while a unity is asserted all the more in another dimension, that of a circle or cycle';<sup>5</sup> music is 'superlinear' in the sense of a 'line' incorporating breaks, rupture, discontinuity, and so on, but which does not necessarily maintain a fundamental integrity, a unifying thread, or even 'the sense of a great line':<sup>6</sup>

Every rhizome includes lines of segmentation according to which it is stratified, territorialised, organised, signified, attributed, etc.; but also lines of deterritorialisation along which it endlessly flees.<sup>7</sup>

'Deterritorialisation' (which also overlaps with Derrida's 'play') is the process by which structural stability is undermined in the service of variation or development. It has a particular applicability to Debussy, and to the music of the transitional period informing Deleuze and Guattari's concept 'music' which 'conquered realms of continuous variation for this variable or that'.<sup>8</sup> Structures exhibit the musical principle of 'continuous variation': 'every system is in variation and is defined not by its constants and homogeneity but, on the contrary, by a variability whose characteristics are immanent, continuous and regulated in a very specific mode (*variable or optional rules*)'.<sup>9</sup>

Furthermore, continuous variation is to be distinguished from routine transformations of material, and from a straightforward change of context: a linguistic statement (or musical

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<sup>5</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, 'Rhizome', in *On the Line*, trans. John Johnston (New York: Semiotext(e), 1983), p. 8.

<sup>6</sup> Eduard Steuermann on Webern's conducting of Bach. Quoted in Christopher Wintle, 'Analysis and performance: Webern's Concerto Op. 24/II', *Music Analysis*, Vol. 1 (1982), p. 79.

<sup>7</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, 'Rhizome', p. 18.

<sup>8</sup> 'The ferment in the tonal system (in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries) that dissolved temperament and widened chromaticism while preserving a relative tonality, which reinvented new modalities, brought a new amalgamation of major and minor'. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, pp. 95-6.

<sup>9</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *ibid.*, pp. 93-4. Italics in the original. Music is the most developed and dominant example of such structures. Deleuze and Guattari maximise this ground through analogy: for example, entire systems are analysed as 'major' and 'minor' in the musical sense, or as 'generalised chromaticism'.

unit) placed 'in variation' is to 'send it through all the prosodic, semantic, syntactical, and phonological variables that can affect it in the shortest moment of time (the smallest interval)', but this is not to say that such variables 'are merely situational, and that the statement remains constant in principle'.<sup>10</sup> The statement is both deterritorialised *by* its context, and 'flees' its abstract contexts of structural regularity along 'lines of flight', escaping one context to create another. The statement therefore takes both an active and passive part in this process: contexts change, but lines of flight also place the statement in new contexts. In music, the main effects of this function are obvious: to make problematic the notion of constants (themes, motives, etc.); to iterate that a change of context is a variable that effects a change in the status (and the meaning) of a constant, and to discard all reductive explanations (since these normally reduce to constants and not to contexts).<sup>11</sup> Deterritorialisation therefore functions as a dispersion of unity, discreteness and identity. Most importantly, in capturing the reciprocity of statement and context, continuous variation establishes 'a pragmatics internal to language, immanent, including variations of linguistic elements of all kinds [...] placing-in-variation [...] builds a continuum or medium without beginning or end'.<sup>12</sup> That is to say, all systems are conceived here according to the model of Barthes's isologic (self-referential) systems, but much is added to it by the notion that contexts themselves are variables which may be continuous or discontinuous. Laloy's repertoire of explanatory, supplementary signs for the first four bars of *Pelléas* is an example of context as a discontinuous variable (§2.8). The contexts change but the musical statement does not: these contexts connect, traversing the aporia in the structure they strive to create (the aporia are other potential contexts, other discontinuous variables). While Laloy's analysis leads to no very convincing structural description, its lack of cohesion in this respect reveals something fundamental about the music — in Deleuze and Guattari's terms, that a context, a variable, 'can be

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<sup>10</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 94.

<sup>11</sup> 'Reductive' here does not include reduction in the Schenkerian sense. Schenkerian theory is almost alone in not reducing musical 'statements' to constants: for example, the change of (hierarchical) context in which the repetition of a theme occurs is a distinctive feature of a Schenkerian analysis.

<sup>12</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 94. As Deleuze and Guattari make clear, this overlaps partially with J. L. Austin's performative theory of language.

continuous over a portion of its trajectory, then leap or skip, without affecting its continuous variation'.<sup>13</sup> Laloy's contexts themselves change: the sign of antiquity, for example, becomes modality, then fifths, then the triad-without-third; all these are contextual features of the musical statement, they contextualise it but do not actually *constitute* the statement since they can be described 'variably'. 'What this does', according to Deleuze and Guattari, is to 'impose an absent development as an "alternative continuity" that is virtual yet real'<sup>14</sup> — what in music theory we are used to calling an unrealised implication.

**5.2** When Deleuze and Guattari write that in Debussy 'music molecularises sound matter'<sup>15</sup> this is clearly Bergsonian: Debussy, not Wagner, composes Bergsonian music (§4.4), a cultural fact brought into conjunction with modernity:

The work of the plane of composition develops in two directions that involve a disaggregation of the tonal frame: in Wagner, the immense flattened-out areas [*aplats*] of continuous variation that embrace, and combine forces<sup>16</sup> that have become sound, and in Debussy, the defective scales [*tons rompus*] that separate and disperse forces by organising their retrogradable [harmonic?] motions — Wagner-universe, Debussy-universe.<sup>17</sup>

How continuous variation works in practice is exemplified in the Prelude to *Pelléas*, where Dahlhaus reads it enacted as 'retraction':

Debussy [...] tended during the course of a scene to dissolve rather than elaborate the motives that emerge as symbols from the orchestral background. [...] he is a composer who retracts rather than expands [...] with a technique of reduction that

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<sup>13</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *ibid.*, p. 95.

<sup>14</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *ibid.*, p. 95.

<sup>15</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *ibid.*, p. 343.

<sup>16</sup> 'Force', a fundamental concept in Deleuze and Guattari, indicates here the contexts or movements of signification that 'seize' sound and which constitute its meanings. Hence 'meaning is force'. See Massumi, *A User's Guide*, pp. 10-46.

<sup>17</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchill (London: Verso, 1994), p. 191. Translation modified. The translators render *tons rompus* as 'broken tones' which entirely misses the point in this context. 'Defective scales', while an invidious term in itself, conventionally denotes the whole-tone and octatonic scales which are 'non-retrogradable' in Messiaen's sense of a form that can be understood palindromically: in the case of scale, this ensures that no tonic is determined by interval sequence, and that the functions of dominant, tonic and leading note are not inherent in the interval relations of the scale.

ultimately leads the music into silence. It is his tendency to retract, not his use of musical symbols, that reveals his proximity to [...] 'symbolism'. If the lyrical process in Mallarmé's poems consists in 'retracting' the meaning of the words until they stand as ciphers for the unutterable, a similar process takes place in Debussy's music as the nominal meanings attached to his leitmotifs gradually fade so as to make way for premonitions arising from anxiety, the psychic core of fin-de-siècle lyric drama.<sup>18</sup>

Retractions in Mallarmé occur through correspondences: words have so many semantic and sonic relations that they become overdetermined, so overburdened with significance that they become complex signs ('ciphers') for the Idea, which cannot be stated overtly. Dahlhaus's emphasis of the link between this poetic practice and musical composition in *Pelléas* — a rare statement of the correspondence of literary and musical *structure* in Symbolism — hints that retraction is an anti-teleological type of variation. Retraction is therefore an act of deterritorialising the 'leitmotiv', dispersing its constituents and discrete forms in order to recreate the un-individuated, subconscious impulses represented in the symbols and ellipses of the text. The type of structure that Dahlhaus describes is, *in nuce*, a Bergsonian 'multiplicity of fusion' unique to duration, and which 'expresses the inseparability of variations'.<sup>19</sup> This, of course, could describe Wagnerian melody. But Deleuze and Guattari develop Bergson's concept in ways that reveal a correspondence with Dahlhaus's analysis:

the multiple *must be made*, not by continuously adding a higher dimension, but [...] by a force of restraint, at the level of the dimensions already available, by making *n-1*. Only thus does the one become part of the multiple: by always being subtracted from it. Subtract the unique from the multiplicity being constituted; write to the *n-1*. Such a system could be called a rhizome.<sup>20</sup>

'Retraction' (Dahlhaus) is equivalent to 'subtraction' (Deleuze and Guattari): to 'retract' a theme or motive by allowing its nominal meanings to fade, will be to subtract what is unique (*n-1*), to reveal in the process how the one is part of the multiple, and to allow the

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<sup>18</sup> Carl Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, trans. J. Bradford Robinson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), pp. 350-1.

<sup>19</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, p. 127.

<sup>20</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, 'Rhizome', p. 10. Italics in the original.

multiple to follow other paths within the rhizomatic system. Thus, the repeated dissolution and resurrection of the 'leitmotifs' (which mimes the fragile psychological integrity of the characters) exemplifies the more general concept of deterritorialisation: the 'leitmotifs' are extended in the structure, encroach or are encroached upon, in a process that seems goal-less and endless. But although retraction leads the music 'into silence', this is not its goal or its result. The 'leitmotifs' are reconstituted, restated and reappear as if nothing had happened; they change but they do not evolve.<sup>21</sup> Thus, Debussy's achievement lies in reinventing the signifying mode of the *leitmotiv*, and in inaugurating a Modernist, non-Wagnerian semiotic process that stands as an example of Lyotard's 'interminable metonymy' of signification. Uniquely, this also corresponds with the dramatic scenario so that the post-structuralist conception of signification also informs the drama and facilitates the negotiation of the tension between music and non-music in the symbol (§3.6).

5.3 Boulez comments that the relationship of the characters is 'deliberately vague and allusive'.<sup>22</sup> In the *dramatis personae* Maeterlinck specifies that Pelléas and Golaud are half brothers, but their mother Geneviève's relationship to Arkel is unspecified (daughter or daughter-in-law?).<sup>23</sup> Yniold and 'la pauvre petite' (Mélisande's child) are half brother and sister, replicating the relationship of Golaud and Pelléas (although even here the father is not conclusively identified). There is therefore something *systematically* vague about this line-up: doubtful paternity entails that the biological origins of the characters are half-unspecified, a lack which belongs on the axis of the substitution of part for whole, a structure of synecdoche in the family scenario that allows that characters to enter into relation with each other as a

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<sup>21</sup> The rhizomatic nature of the Debussian 'leitmotiv' emerges in their relation to 'arabesque', which Debussy probably understood as a 'vegetable ornament' combining the functions of 'contour' and 'intertwining' (Debussy's figures) that originated in Ruskin's praise of foliage ornament in Renaissance architecture. See Langham Smith, *Debussy on Music*, p. 31. Although the 'leitmotifs' in *Pelléas* are not arabesque forms (the exception is Mélisande's 'hair' theme, Prelude, bars 16-19), they do exploit the arabesque function that I am identifying here as rhizomatic. To clarify the metaphor, although the foliage of creeping plants is not literally a rhizome, it imitates above ground the multiplicity of secondary roots of the rhizomes underground stem. Pursuing these theoretical metaphors (Debussy's and Deleuze and Guattari's) leads to the capture of this primary rhizomatic structure in *Pelléas*.

<sup>22</sup> Pierre Boulez, 'Reflections on *Pelléas et Mélisande*', in *Orientations*, ed. Jean-Jacques Nattiez, trans. Martin Cooper (London: Faber, 1986), p. 308.

<sup>23</sup> Nichols and Langham Smith, *Pelléas*, p. 65.

compensation for this original loss. Here Debussy finds an indispensable place for music: dramatic, as distinct from the 'literary' web of family ties are located in the character-themes foregrounding from the beginning the re-alignment of these relationships. Outside the family schema are Arkel and Mélisande whose backgrounds are completely absent. Mélisande has no past and therefore no origin. (This is why her theme is consistently pitched on Ab, the dissonant, disruptive tritone relation to the tonic D.) Maeterlinck and Debussy privilege this feature since these two characters are unchanged throughout both musically and dramatically, suggesting a complicity of the wise and the innocent. They hold the drama together by focussing the actions and attitudes of the other, blood-related characters, particularly Mélisande: if familial ties are tenuous, the sexual relations are stronger (Golaud-Mélisande, Mélisande-Pelléas). Debussy's problem, compositionally, is to establish both the individuality of the characters, achieved in the Prelude by compression, producing opposition (individuation) of thematic units that seem to over-value relationship. An awareness of relations is crucial to understanding Debussy's character-themes, which are best defined as *thèmes-objets*.<sup>24</sup> Debussy identified only Mélisande's theme, and then only to explain why it is unvaried (Mélisande remains unchanged to her death). The other themes are varied but, Debussy emphasised, not developed:<sup>25</sup> recall that development is Wagnerism and, worse, a Beethovenian formula. But for all that, commentators have named the themes (often contradictorily) because they recur, superficially and almost naively, like the Wagnerian 'calling cards' Debussy so loved to hate. Thus, a simple correlation of theme and character, sign and object, constitutes a level of direct (and dispensable) semiosis. The identity of the themes/characters, though, is only a necessary pre-condition to agency, those active and reactive forces that fuel any drama. In a world, *Allemonde*, where characters have little depth of personality (*Pelléas* is not a Shakespearean tragedy of character) musico-dramatic weight rests on the responses of the characters and on the interaction of their musical material, that is to say, broadly speaking, on their relations rather than in any essential personality. If this *Pelléaste* relationality is not to be developmental in the Wagnerian sense, then the relations

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<sup>24</sup> *Thème-objet* is Barraqué's term for a theme which 'does not develop, and in the fixed nature of its appearances, has the meaning of a "thème-objet"'. *Debussy* (Paris: Seuil, 1962), p. 154.

<sup>25</sup> See Grayson, *Genesis*, p. 231.

must be established from the beginning (as they are in Maeterlinck's *dramatis personae*) so that the blood relationships exist in the drama as one of the webs from which the characters cannot escape. There is very little that is positive about these relationships: family ties are part of the psychic prison in which the characters find themselves, an aspect of their destiny, and which Mélisande, the outsider who inspires desire, threatens to undermine. The drama, such as it is, proceeds from these simple facts of being, not (as in Wagner) from any force of ambition or will. The characters, as discrete individuals, are the ciphers of a Destiny that subjects them to forces, changes of context and conjunction which constitutes their essentially relational identity.<sup>26</sup>

It has often been noted that all the character-themes<sup>27</sup> of the opera can be transformed into one another: anaphora (or metonymy in the Lacanian sense, in which one term leads to another without any progress toward meaning) here represents the 'essential circularity of man's existence'.<sup>28</sup> While the themes announce the characters, they disclose little more than the relationality that Lacan's reading of metonymy shows to be the strategy of unwitting concealment (in Maeterlinck's scenario, it seems that nothing is hidden deliberately: the characters are simply unaware) so that each character is represented musically by multi-referential themes or signifiers in which one character's identity or theme is submersible with the others. In the context of the oneiric world of the opera, such a compression suggests Freudian 'condensation', which in Freud's dream-work implies a relationship through substitution, in Lacan's words 'the structure of the superimposition of signifiers'.<sup>29</sup> Beneath the oppositional structure of thematic presentation in the Prelude, the themes can be imagined as originating in a 'superimposition' but then extended or spread out in time. Take Mélisande's theme: originating in the Destiny theme, it is nothing more than the amalgamation

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<sup>26</sup> In *Le temps retrouvé*, Proust confronts the imperative of remaking the symbolic as the real: 'I was surrounded by symbols (Germantes, Albertine, Gilberte, Saint-Loup, Balbec, etc.) and to the least of these I had to restore the meaning which habit had caused them to lose for me. When we have arrived at reality, we must, to express and preserve it, prevent the intrusion of all those extraneous elements which at every moment the gathered speed of habit lays at our feet' (Marcel Proust, *Remembrance of Things Past*, Vol. 3, trans. Scott Moncrieff, Terence Kilmartin and Andreas Mayor [Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983], p. 934). This is an implicit critique of Maeterlinck's dramatic Symbolism which emphasises character type and determinism above human agency and the texture of experience.

<sup>27</sup> I coin the term 'character-theme' here in order to distinguish the symbolic relation of theme and character in Debussy from Wagner's *leitmotiv*.

<sup>28</sup> Nichols and Langham Smith, *Pelléas*, p. 63.

<sup>29</sup> Lacan, *Écrits*, p. 161.



of the Golaud and Pelléas themes, a feature that symbolises their super-familial relationship; and while Pelléas's theme is not present on the surface in the Prelude, it can be discerned beneath Mélisande's, suggesting the union to come, an 'event' that itself is not fully explicit when it seems to occur in Act 4, scene 4.<sup>30</sup> Thus, it is easy to show that the character-themes are related by the neighbour-note figure: each takes its form from the end of its predecessor, blending or dissolving into the next (Ex. 7). The circular, almost palindromic, signifying chain (Destiny, Golaud, Mélisande, Mélisande's hair, Golaud, Destiny) is an example of signification that perpetually restates two elements (those identified by Laloy), the neighbour-note and the rising 5th/falling 4th, variously distributed. These melodic relationships indicate the undifferentiated, non-individual aspect of oneiric condensation, which pursued to its extreme would contain only one signifier, Destiny, substituting for all the others (rhythm, and more equivocally, timbre and harmony are the signs of individuation), so that Debussy's move toward pure relationality entails hearing the Prelude as continually referring back to the Destiny motive (bars 1-4) into which all the others can be resolved. The motivic relations among the character-themes therefore express the metonymic (container for contained) or synecdochic (part for whole), but this grounds the metaphorical relation of the characters in the drama — in which, for example, Golaud can stand metaphorically for Mélisande since his dramatic existence is a dramatic 'trope' of hers, or the Golaud-Mélisande relation can be understood to trope the relation Pelléas-Mélisande (one liaison both differs from and is similar to the other, but neither relation would have dramatic meaning without the figural counterpointing of the other).

**5.4** However, the twin operation of asserting individuality and defining relationship extends further than the motivic link. Relations, made explicit later in the drama are also subtly present in the Prelude. In bars 12-17 Debussy again seems to remember Wagner's introduction to *Parsifal*, Act 3, in which the new material (section B) extends over the key change to C minor interrupted only by the one-bar return of the opening material (b. 18) as a cadential figure (material that is recapitulated thematically only in b. 24ff.) Wagner's

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<sup>30</sup> Pelléas's theme first appears in Act 1, scene 3 (Durand orchestral score, Fig. 37, pp. 48-9), and is stated explicitly and unaccompanied at the beginning of Act 2, scene 2 (bars 1-2).

blending of unit boundaries is replicated by Debussy in the section over the Bb pedal grounding the melodic material individuating Golaud and Mélisande (bars 12-17); this affirms their relationship and distinguishes it from the 'originary' music (bars 1-4 and repetitions). This is perhaps the most obvious connection of characteristic themes in the Prelude, appropriately, since the marriage bond is voluntary, the strongest at the outset, and that which eventually proves to be the most vulnerable. A crucial change of harmonic context clinches this symbolism. When Golaud's theme is repeated at b. 12, the whole-tone harmonisation of bars 5-6 is replaced by pentatonic harmony already introduced at the end of the Destiny motive (bars 2, 4). But Mélisande's theme is defined by whole-tone harmony leading to a chromatic section (b. 16ff) that states the 'Tristan' chord (F, Ab, Cb, Eb) over the bass Bb, so that the melodic and harmonic structures from b. 12 seem to be out of phase. This horizontal re-conjunction creates new relations (Fig. 5.1):

Fig. 5.1

	Destiny		Golaud
bars 1-7:	diatonic	pentatonic	whole-tone
	Destiny	Golaud	Mélisande
bars 8-16:	diatonic	pentatonic	whole-tone 'Tristan'

Fig. 5.1 demonstrates the manner in which each of the character-themes is, in Deleuze and Guattari's terms, a 'refrain', an 'aggregate of matters of expression'<sup>31</sup> that draws a territory and develops into territorial landscapes and motifs'.<sup>32</sup> Specifically, the character-theme is a first-type refrain, a 'territorial assemblage', in its simplest musical form 'a "nome", a little tune, a melodic formula that seeks recognition and remains a bedrock or ground of the polyphony (cantus firmus)'.<sup>33</sup> In pre-Romantic music and

<sup>31</sup> A 'matter of expression' is defined by Massumi as something that overpowers content, 'a bundle of potential functions', *A User's Guide*, p. 152.

<sup>32</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 323.

<sup>33</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *ibid.*, p. 312. 'Assemblages combine in a regime of signs in a semiotic machine' (p. 83).

leitmotivic composition the refrain is the 'anti-chaos' force that provides a stable point of reference and a relation of similarities and oppositions, in short, a structure (this seems to be why most commentators have retained the term 'leitmotive' despite Debussy's rejection of it). Since the structure created by the character-themes is an *abstract* structure, a 'territorial assemblage' marking differences and relations as a template vivified and made active by the characters' 'natural' or psychological interaction in the drama as it unfolds on stage, the composer needs the refrain in order to 'transform it from within, deterritorialise it'<sup>34</sup> through change of context. No sooner, then, is the assemblage constructed than it is complicated and unpicked by dramatic conjunctions, conflicts and interactions: if these latter are not foreseen by the composer, the *Leitmotive* will lack any true dramatic or psychological function and will remain 'calling cards' only.

However, in the opera itself, but especially in the 'pure music' of the Prelude, Debussy also exploits a second type of refrain that plays with the 'seed or internal structure' of the first type and has a 'catalytic' function, 'not only to increase the speed of exchanges or reactions in that which surrounds it, but also to ensure indirect interactions between elements devoid of so-called natural affinity, and thereby to form organised masses'.<sup>35</sup> This 'cosmic refrain of the sound machine' unpicks and disperses the elements of the character themes as a function of structural multiplicity. Given Debussy's 'transitional' status, it is not surprising to find both refrain-types in a single work. Deleuze and Guattari identify the second type of refrain as typical of the 'modern age' in which material becomes 'necessarily molecular',<sup>36</sup> and is defined by the operations of 'consistency' applied to it. Heterogeneous elements are held together to form a 'fuzzy set' which becomes discrete and itself takes on consistency<sup>37</sup> (the larger unit is itself held together in a heterogeneous set), so that units composed of oppositions are defined by the consolidating force of repetition. Deleuze and Guattari's definition of the processes of such dissemination through the structure is almost uncannily appropriate to Debussy:

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<sup>34</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *ibid.*, p. 349.

<sup>35</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *ibid.*, p. 348.

<sup>36</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *ibid.*, p. 342.

<sup>37</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *ibid.*, p. 323.

firstly, 'augmentations and diminutions, additions and withdrawals, amplifications and eliminations by unequal values'; secondly, 'a retrograde motion running in both directions',<sup>38</sup> the palindrome. All of these features are exemplified in the Prelude as devices for making the refrain structures rhizomatic by repetition; and the consequent multiplicity of relations projects the figural relations of the character-themes into the organic microstructure of the piece (§6.9).

The conceptualisation of the character-themes as assemblages varied by changes of context, dissemination and matters of expression brings into focus the type of discourse constituted in the Prelude. Re-examining the origins of language, Deleuze and Guattari elaborate the concept of 'indirect discourse' as primary (rejecting the primacy of the figurative as traditionally assumed in Francophone linguistics since Rousseau). 'Indirect discourse' is 'the assemblage [...] that explains all the voices present within a single voice, the glimmer of girls in a monologue by Charlus, the languages in a language, the order words [performatives] in a word'.<sup>39</sup> The character-themes are therefore special types of 'order words': they are not designed to communicate since they hold no information (hence they are indirectly discursive). And, in Deleuze and Guattari, the order word 'gives life orders'<sup>40</sup> and language is considered to be constituted primarily as a vehicle for commands, a concept that cuts across the function of the performative ('what one does by saying it') and the illocutionary ('what one does in speaking').<sup>41</sup> Like the order-word, the Debussian character-theme does not 'tell' us anything but 'commands' a meaning and brings it into existence; and like the order-word, the character-theme moves freely within the discourse transmitted 'either from one statement [context] to another or within each statement, insofar as each statement accomplishes an act and the act is accomplished in the statement'.<sup>42</sup> The discursive in Debussy, understood with the aid of Deleuze and Guattari as 'freely indirect', is therefore bound up with the functions of discreteness (of the word or theme), with the potential to signify in changes of context, and with repetition.

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<sup>38</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *ibid.*, p. 349.

<sup>39</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *ibid.*, p. 80.

<sup>40</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *ibid.*, p. 76.

<sup>41</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *ibid.*, p. 78.

<sup>42</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *ibid.*, p. 79.

Furthermore, Deleuze and Guattari's elaboration of their Bergsonian view of structure is, not unpredictably, an accurate fit with Debussy's style, especially concerning the destabilising effect of repetition ('frames', 'sections'). Beyond the sonata, which is 'rather like a crossroads where the opening of the plane of composition is born from the *joining* of musical sections, from the closure of sonorous compounds',<sup>43</sup> music becomes more complex: 'the closure or shutting off' of the 'sonorous compounds of sensation' through the joining of their frames, of their sections is 'accompanied by the possibility of opening onto an ever more limitless plane of composition',<sup>44</sup> so that the closural effect of repetition is a generative device through reproduction and opening onto the plane of difference. What is repeated is, by definition, reproduced, but since this leads to closure it allows the structure to open up the new. Fundamentally, Bergson and his commentators assert the value and creative primacy of opposition, the necessity for discrete units both to exist in a syntagm forming signifying sequences beyond mere contiguity and to create relationships that go beyond paradigmatic identity. This can only occur in time:

the temporal is [...] only the confused form of the rational. What we perceive as being a succession of states is conceived by our intellect, once the fog has settled, as a system of relations.<sup>45</sup>

The tension in the musical work between entities that are simultaneously discrete and necessarily connected suggests that closed forms (like Debussy's repeated units) contain the possibility of development within the composition which will transcend contiguity and achieve a 'limitless', true continuity. The more complex 'sonorous compounds' become (the more 'composed' variables they contain), the greater the possibility for relationships that leap across the barrier of the frame, and the more unbounded and libidinal they are.

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<sup>43</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, p. 190. My italics.

<sup>44</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *ibid.*, p. 190.

<sup>45</sup> Bergson, 'The possible and the real', in *The Creative Mind*, p. 105.

## Versions of Poe

5.5 Debussy's precursors in initiating such signifying structures would almost certainly be literary: but examples of refrain structures comparable to the character-themes in contemporaneous French poetry are lacking. This traditional form, however, is used and renewed in Edgar Allan Poe's 'The Raven', the Symbolists' seminal poem in English.

As an avid reader of Poe, Debussy would have known this poem (Fig. 5.1) and may also have read Poe's description of its composition (1846):

As commonly used, the *refrain*, or burden, not only is limited to lyric verse, but depends for its impression upon the force of monotone — both in sound and thought. The pleasure is deduced solely from the sense of identity — of repetition. I resolved to diversify, and so vastly to heighten, the effect, by adhering, in general, to the monotone of sound, while I continually varied that of thought: that is to say, I determined to produce continuously novel effects, by the variation *of the application* of the *refrain* — the *refrain* itself remaining, for the most part, unvaried.

These points being settled, I next bethought me of the *nature* of my *refrain*. Since its application was to be repeatedly varied, it was clear that the *refrain* itself must be brief, for there would have been an insurmountable difficulty in frequent variations of application in any sentence of length. In proportion to the brevity of the sentence, would, of course, be the facility of variation. This led me at once to a single word ['Nevermore'] as the best *refrain*.<sup>46</sup>

The striking aspect of this self-description is Poe's understanding of context. Whereas in earlier or traditional poetry the refrain is a cadence form, in 'The Raven' this function is united with a heightened awareness of the incantatory function of repetition; and Poe is acutely conscious that the refrain is a constant which can be varied (deterritorialised) by its context ('variation *of the application* of the *refrain* — the *refrain* itself remaining, for the most part, unvaried'). 'Nevermore' is not a *Leitmotiv* in the poem: Poe's technique provides a potential model for the Debussian character-theme which does not develop, except to dissolve (or 'retract'), and is altered in structural function by 'variation in application' (Poe), that is, by its 'placing in variation' (Deleuze and Guattari). Each

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<sup>46</sup> Edgar Allan Poe, 'The Philosophy of Composition' [April 1846], in *Essays and Reviews*, ed. G. R. Thompson (New York: Library of America, 1984), pp. 17-18. Italics in the original.

appearance of the refrain concludes a stage of the narrative, which leads invariably to the same unfathomable, final, yet eternal statement, 'Nevermore':

here [...] I saw [...] the opportunity afforded for the effect on which I had been depending — that is to say, the effect of the *variation of application*. I saw that I could make the first query propounded by the lover — the first query to which the Raven should reply 'Nevermore' — [...] a commonplace one — the second less so — the third still less and so on — until at length the lover, startled [...] by its frequent repetition [...] is excited to superstition.<sup>47</sup>

Thus, the function of the refrain is primarily structural, a constant precisely designed by Poe to both territorialise each narrative block (as cadence) and to deterritorialise the content by its effect on the narrator, and therefore on the narrative. Excited 'to superstition', the narrator

wildly propounds [...] queries whose solution he has passionately at heart — propounds them half in superstition and half in that species of despair which delights in self torture — propounds them not altogether because he believes in the prophetic or demonic character of the bird (which, reason assures him, is merely repeating a lesson learned by rote) but because he experiences a phrenzied [*sic*] pleasure in so modeling [*sic*] his questions as to receive from the *expected* 'Nevermore' the most delicious because the most intolerable sorrow.<sup>48</sup>

Baudelaire enjoyed being shocked by this deliberate calculation of effect, and pretended to believe that Poe was simply being 'impertinent'.<sup>49</sup> But he also relished the opportunity to approve Poe's self-exposure of constructive logic in an age that deified naive and unreflective genius:

Just as some writers make a parade of negligence, aiming at a masterpiece with their eyes shut, full of confidence in disorder, and expecting letters thrown up to the ceiling to fall down again as a poem on the floor, so Edgar Poe — one of the most inspired men known to me — prided himself on hiding spontaneity, on simulating cold deliberation. [...] Only believers in chance, [...] the fatalists of inspiration, and the

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<sup>47</sup> Poe, 'Philosophy', p. 19. Italics in the original.

<sup>48</sup> Poe, *ibid.*, p. 19. Italics in the original.

<sup>49</sup> 'Many people [...] would be shocked if I were to analyse the article where our poet, with an appearance of ingenuousness, but with a delicate impertinence I cannot disapprove of, minutely explained the building method he used'. Baudelaire, 'Further Notes on Edgar Poe' [1857], in *Selected Writings on Art and Literature*, ed. and trans. P. E. Charvet (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), p. 205.

fanatics of blank verse, can find such *minutiae* odd. There are no *minutiae* in matters of art.<sup>50</sup>

Baudelaire at once claims that Poe 'simulates' cold deliberation (Poe: 'the whole work advanced step by step towards its goal with the precision and rigorous logic of a mathematical problem'),<sup>51</sup> and that the 'minutiae', the structural details of the poem are not 'odd'. Baudelaire realises, but does not say explicitly, that Poe's 'ingenuous' description of his working methods cannot be accepted as an account of the creative process, but that it is a self-analysis *post hoc* (a poietic analysis in Nattiez's terms).<sup>52</sup> That its results are deemed valid<sup>53</sup> is unsurprising, since Baudelaire is no naive or negligent poet dismissive of the importance of poetic technique; nor was such technical discussion unfamiliar to him. Thus, Baudelaire's assumption that the reading public (and, to a degree, himself) find such matters 'odd' perhaps masks the more profound shock of 'The Raven' ('this strange poem [...], this profound taste for beautiful forms, especially if they have an element of strangeness, for ornate surroundings and oriental luxury'),<sup>54</sup> in the form of the 'infinite variety of applications' of the refrain and the 'inspired way of using repetition of the same line or several lines'.<sup>55</sup>

**5.6** The strangeness identified here is also a technical oddity attendant on the refrain, and in Baudelaire's gloss it is therefore always closely followed by reference to repetition, and the unusual types and forms of rhyme. Poe's repetition concerns both the refrain and rhyme: the rhyme scheme is constant in each stanza (ABCBBB) and since the refrain (B) is placed at the end it is the constant informing the entire poem, gathering the rhymes of each stanza to it so that from the outset it has the appearance of inevitability (see Fig. 5.1).

<sup>50</sup> Baudelaire, 'Further Notes'. p. 206. Italics in the original.

<sup>51</sup> Baudelaire's version of Poe's words is trivially inaccurate. 'Further Notes', p. 206.

<sup>52</sup> In the introduction to 'La genèse d'un poème', Baudelaire's translation of Poe's 'The Philosophy of Composition', he writes: 'Poetic technique [*la poétique*], we are told, is made from and modelled on poems. Here is a poet who claims that his poem was composed following [*d'après*] its poetic technique'. Edgar Allan Poe, *Histoires grotesques et sérieuses* [1865], trans. Charles Baudelaire, ed. Roger Asselineau (Paris: Flammarion, 1986), p. 220.

<sup>53</sup> As long as we read the last sentence correctly, in which 'minutiae' becomes a pejorative term for 'irrelevant detail'; Baudelaire means that this is a non-existent category in art.

<sup>54</sup> Baudelaire, 'Further Notes', pp. 205-6.

<sup>55</sup> Baudelaire, *ibid.*, pp. 206-7.



Because Poe also ensures that the name of the absent (and perhaps the most significant) player in the poem rhymes with the refrain (Lenore/nothing more/Nevermore), the message of the Raven, that Lenore is lost to the narrator (lines 91-97), is both inscribed sonically in her name, dominates the rhyme scheme, and through this, effects a certain semantic control as well.

Fig. 5.1. Poe, 'The Raven' (1846-9), lines 1-6<sup>56</sup>

	line endings	half-lines	internal rhymes
1 Once upon a midnight dreary,		a	a
while I pondered,			x
weak and weary,	A	a	a
2 Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore —	B	b	b
3 While I nodded,			x
nearly napping,		c	c
suddenly there came a tapping,	C	c	c
4 As of some one gently rapping,		c	c
rapping at my chamber door —	B	b	b
5 " 'Tis some visiter [ <i>sic</i> ]," I muttered,			x
"tapping at my chamber door —	B	b	b
6 Only this and nothing more."	B	b	b

Poe's self-imposed technical challenge, the exploitation of repetition and refrain, brings with it the challenge of maintaining structural contrast provided here in the complex structure of internal rhymes. As Fig. 5.1 shows, the stanza form ABC BBB is a repetition structure of two tercets complicated by a more developed form *aab ccc bbb* in which internal rhymes repeat and 'vary' the end-rhymes. Thus the binary (two-tercet) stanza is overlaid with an incipient ternary structure created by the correspondence of internal rhymes. Such an ambiguity of grouping is found in Debussy's Prelude in which binary durational structures are superimposed (§8.8a), a technique that has more than a passing resemblance to the consequences of Poe's repetitions:

<sup>56</sup> 'The Raven', *Poems 1836-1844*, in *The Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, Vol. 1, ed. Thomas Ollive Mabbott (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969, pp. 346-9.

a persistent return of sentences that counterfeits the obsessions of melancholy or a fixed idea; of using the refrain pure and simple, but introduced in various ways; [...] of double and triple rhymes, and [...] the surprises of the leonine line [i.e. a line with internal rhyme].<sup>57</sup>

This ambiguity in 'The Raven' is complicated by internal repetitions which do not fall at the line break: quaint/curious (l. 2); rapping (l. 4); tapping (lines 3, 5); pondered/nodded/muttered (lines 1, 3, 5). Further alliteration and assonance create the complex of sonic relations given in Fig. 5.2:

Fig. 5.2

	I	II	III
1	dreary	pondered	
	<u>while</u>		
	<u>w-</u>		
	<u>w-</u>		
2	-eak		quaint
	-eary,		curious
			lore
3		nodded	
		n-	
	-early	napping	
		tapping,	
4		gently	
		chamber	
		rapping	
		rapping	door —
5	'Tis		
	vi-		
	-siter		
	chamber	tapping	
			door —
6	This		(nothing )
			more.

Thus, repetition, as alliteration and assonance, is the primary object, structured by a ternary paradigmatic progression (I, II, III) that provides a model for the subsequent repetitions. Fig. 5.2 contains primary relations only, defined by three main paradigmatic units, dreary/pondered/lore (Baudelaire's 'triple rhymes') which form a matrix for the sonic relationships in the stanza. There are obvious correspondences of sound and meaning (for example, rapping/tapping), but Poe's repetition is confined mainly to the

<sup>57</sup> Baudelaire, 'Further Notes', p. 207.

phoneme. When lines 5 and 6 add a supplementary paradigm (Tis/this) introducing the refrain rhyme (door/-more), Poe achieves an imitation of musicality through the intensification of the rhyme function of verse. Thus repetition and transformation are combined in a sequential model such that the structure of this first stanza resembles paradigmatic analyses of melodic structure, in which sequences of oppositions and variations of them are normally present.

**5.7** What also caught Baudelaire's interest, I think, is the deterritorialising of the refrain by the change of speaker (the narrator begins with the varied form, after which the Raven takes up the 'unvaried' form) and context: 'Nevermore' begins as a meaningless, automatic response but gathers significance as the poem proceeds. In this respect the refrain resembles Debussy's character-themes in *Pelléas* which, initially, have no meaning (that is, no external reference) but acquire it as the opera unfolds. In the *Prélude*, then, the character-themes have no 'leitmotiv' function, since we do not know their referents and there is no on-stage drama to direct their appearance: the *Prelude* is therefore a unique context in the opera in which the character-themes are as yet only themes or ideas (it is even doubtful that they are motives, since they are not at this stage 'motiv'ic').

This similar progression of the sign in Poe and Debussy from emptiness to fullness, from structure to semantics is an important element of strangeness and anxiety in this period: how to make mechanical, structurally necessary, sounds carry meaning becomes a focus for the Symbolist preoccupation with music, in which this problem is inherent. As Poe describes it, the poetic refrain determines the increasing strangeness of the narrator's questions to the Raven: the questions are formulated and selected so that the constant answers will appear as increasingly inevitable replies to the questions' content, as if, in musical terms, an antecedent were made progressively more implicative of an unvaried consequent. Baudelaire recognises that strangeness is not located primarily in the questions asked, but in the complicity of question and answer. Normally, a constant answer ('as if by rote') will be unsettling because it is mechanical and illogical, but Poe's procedure shocks because the narrator repeatedly attempts to make the question a logical

antecedent (transposing this function from the logical consequent), and in so doing raises the stakes from the 'commonplace' to the existential in order to savour the nihilism of 'Nevermore' ("Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form from off my door!" / Quoth the Raven "Nevermore"; lines 101-2). The result of this process now appears rather conventional, a series of cadence-refrains each more definite than the last because in each there is more at stake. The progression toward nihilism is a telos of nothingness: as a goal, this entails that the deterritorialising function of the questions creates an increasingly integrative narrative structure.

However, the question-answer format also affirms the value of opposition in the sense that one is constant and the other is a variable striving for integration with the constant: Poe creates here a prototype for the relation of oppositions which relies not on the revelation of the unity of two 'terms', but on a progressive functional integration; that is to say, an interdependence in which the constant (the refrain) determines the transformations in the variable term. For the *fin-de-siècle* musician, 'The Raven' could provide a model for a non-Romantic thematic or motivic relation that escapes the model of conflict-resolution and thematic unity: in short, Poe's treatment of the refrain provides a model of functional correspondence complementing the widely-explored sonic *correspondances* so widely explored in 19th-century French poetic practice (§4.2).

**5.8** Both Baudelaire and Mallarmé translated 'The Raven' in the form of prose-poems, and Debussy's friend Gabriel Mourey produced a version in verse.<sup>58</sup> All three reveal deterritorialisation on the sonic level, a diffusion of the phonemes of the refrain through the stanzas, by means of *correspondances*. Fig. 5.3 displays the translations in poetic format in order to reveal sonic repetitions and their (often implicit) rhyme functions. Poe's rhyme scheme and exploitation of internal rhymes is maximised in each version, since this is an effect more easily achieved in French than in English. (Poe's individuation

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<sup>58</sup> Baudelaire, 'La genèse d'un poème', in Poe, *Histoires grotesques*, pp. 222-5; Mallarmé, *Les poèmes d'Edgar Poe* [London 1863, Paris 1889], in *Oeuvres complètes*, pp. 190-3; Gabriel Mourey, *Edgar Allan Poe: Poésies complètes* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1910). The artistic friendship of Debussy and Mourey is documented in Jarocinski, as follows: 'Gabriel Mourey, poet and critic, translator of Poe and Swinburne [...] introduced Debussy to the poetry of Swinburne as well as to the paintings of Turner and Redon'. *Debussy*, pp. 83-4. See also Lockspeiser, *Debussy*, Vol. 1, pp. 107-12.

of the language partly explains the attraction of 'The Raven' for French poets.) Mallarmé's shorter version is naturally the most economical (four rhymes *a-d*) but contains a hapax (rhyme *x*) followed by a colon, a hiatus not present in Baudelaire or Mourey (closer inspection reveals this to be structurally crucial; see Fig. 5.4). Mourey is the most profligate (six rhymes *a-f*) and Baudelaire the most obsessively repetitive (see the frequency of rhymes *b, d*). All versions reproduce Poe's onomatopoeic 'tapping/rapping/' (line 4), but only Mallarmé capitalises on this effect by projecting it back into lines 1-3: the imitative *appesantissais* and *dodelinais* exploit the more recondite French equivalents of Poe's 'pondered' and 'nodded' for this reason. Baudelaire and Mallarmé also attempt a closed form for the first stanza since rhyme *a* returns in the last phrase: Mourey, on the other hand, maintains openness by recapitulating the rhyme *d* first stated in line 2 of his version.

The effect of repetition, however, is more pervasive and insistent than is revealed by the rhyme schemes. Figs. 5.4-5.6 contain phonemic analyses of each version: classes of phonemes are displayed paradigmatically and phonemic sequences are boxed. Baudelaire (Fig. 5.4) first prefers the invariance of obsessive repetition to relate *minuit lugubre* and *curieux volumes*, an association projected onto the cadence *murmurai-je/ ... plus*. *Minuit* also generates another associative complex {*méditais, faible, fatigué, précieux, curieux, assoupi*} which relates thinking, lassitude and arcane knowledge — the features of a Symbolist dream. However, the *-i-* of *assoupi* also creates a relation with the opposed, subsequent event: the arrival of the visitor (*il se fit [...] visiteur*) awakens the narrator, but — as Baudelaire's repetitions communicate — blurs the boundary of dream and reality. Thus, the most significant sequence in this version is the elaboration of *curieux* as {*un minuit lugubre, méditais, assoupi, il se fit, visiteur, rien*}, which associates all the fundamental notions of Poe's first stanza. In Mallarmé (Fig. 5.5), phonemic sequence is more developed and structurally essential. As in Baudelaire *un minuit lugubre* and *curieux volume* are linked, but this is opposed by the association generated by *fois* into the long vowels of *bizarre, savoir* which emphasises the singularity of the book's content. Mallarmé then develops the complex *-ais/-é* inaugurated by *appesantissais* and

extended to *dodelinais*. Thus there is a progression of associations opposed phonemically, until the last phrase before the colon, *somnolent presque*, which halts the progression of the soporific -o-: this latter phrase is first defined as a phonemic sequence by generating *soudain se fit un heurt* and *comme de quelqu'un* (the latter imitates Poe's 'tapping', as it does in Baudelaire). When Mallarmé breaks Poe's line 3 with the -que of *presque* and the colon, Poe's 'suddenly' is communicated and reinforced by the nasal vowels and glottal stop of *un heurt* (recapitulated in *cela seul*, which again adds 'singularity'). *Soudain* in turn generates the opposed quality, *doucement*, which then enters the relational complex of *frappant*. In this way, Mallarmé increases the tension of opposition in Poe's original, and in contrast to Baudelaire, shifts the semantic focus of the stanza from the merging of dream and reality to the oddity of the events: the subtle function of this transformation is to privilege the relation of repetition to the uncanny, the essential mood in Poe.

Mourey (Fig. 5.6) follows the earlier versions and learns much from them, maintaining the relation *minuit/curieux volumes*, Mallarmé's *fois/bizarres* and *méditais/faible/baissais*, and of course *frappant/doucement*. But the associative complexes are more developed than in either of his predecessors: *science/frappant* conveys the relation of book knowledge and the Raven's 'science' yet to be offered) while *triste minuit* and *méditais/faible* are gathered together in the cadence of *oubliée* —, after which *baissais/tête/presque* is developed as a gradual opening out of -ée in preparation for the suddenness of *tout à coup*. Here, imitating Mallarmé's opposition *somnolent/soudain*, Mourey makes it even more explicit by developing the second and third phonemes of *assoupi* in *tout à coup* and *un heurt*. Mallarmé's innovation is therefore consolidated by Mourey's transformation of it as *eut<sup>i</sup>un heurt*. Thus, *il y eut*, the sonic representation of 'suddenly' can now be associated with the cause of the sudden event, *un visiteur* (line 5) and extended into the last line of the stanza in *heurtant* ('rapping') and *seulement*). The relational clarity of Mourey's version, while not necessarily a poetic virtue, privileges repetition as the subject of the stanza as a whole, and builds up the oppositional structure introduced by Mallarmé. It therefore approaches more closely than either Mallarmé or

Baudelaire the distinctive features of Debussy's style: whether influenced by him or symptomatic of a mutual radicalisation of Symbolist 'musicality' (Mourey's and Debussy's conversations began in the 1880s), Mourey's version represents the final stage in the recasting of 'The Raven' as an early modernist French poem: the style of dissociation and the opposition of phonemic blocks of material is overt, while the restoration of a verse form is a conservative-radical strategy countering the narrative continuity in the prose versions of Baudelaire and Mallarmé. That this move towards modernity in the poets can be observed in relation to a common text suggests that 'The Raven' is the ground on which stylistic experiments have been conducted, experiments fuelled in theory by sustained reference to music (Ch. 4). Debussy, I think, was not unaffected by them.

Fig. 5.3

	Baudelaire (1865)	Mallarmé (London 1863, Paris 1889)	Gabriel Mourey (1910)
1	Une fois, sur un minuit lugubre, pendant que je méditais, faible et fatigué,	Une fois, par un minuit lugubre, tandis que je m'appesantissais, faible et fatigué,	Une fois, par un triste minuit, comme je méditais, faible et las,
2	sur maint précieux et curieux volume d'une doctrine oubliée,	sur maint curieux et bizarre volume de savoir oublié —	sur quelques bizarres et curieux volumes de science oubliée —
3	pendant que je donnais la tête, presque assoupi, soudain il se fit un tapotement,	tandis que je dodelinais la tête, sommolant presque: soudain se fit un heurt,	tandis que je baissais la tête, presque assoupi, tout à coup il y eut un heurt,
4	comme de quelqu'un frappant doucement, frappant à la porte de ma chambre.	comme de quelqu'un frappant doucement, frappant à la porte de ma chambre — <i>[omitted in Mallarmé]</i>	comme de quelqu'un frappant doucement, frappant à la porte de ma chambre.
5	'C'est quelque visiteur, — murmurai-je, — qui frappe à la porte de ma chambre; ce n'est rien que cela, et rien de plus.'	<i>[omitted in Mallarmé]</i> cela seul et rien de plus.	'C'est quelque visiteur', murmurai-je, heurtant à la porte de ma chambre — seulement cela et rien de plus.
6			



Fig. 5.4: Baudelaire, 'Le corbeau', lines 1-6.

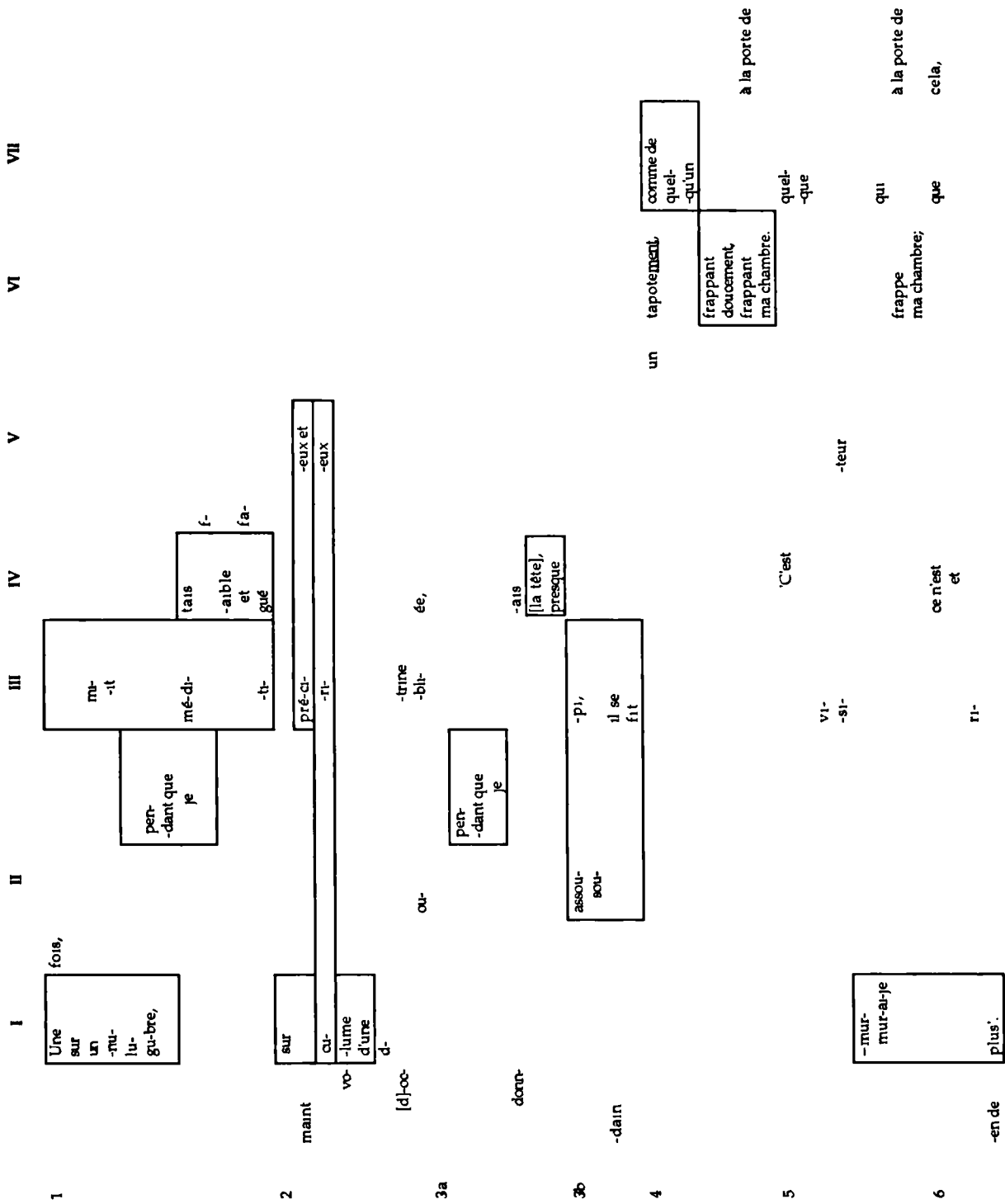
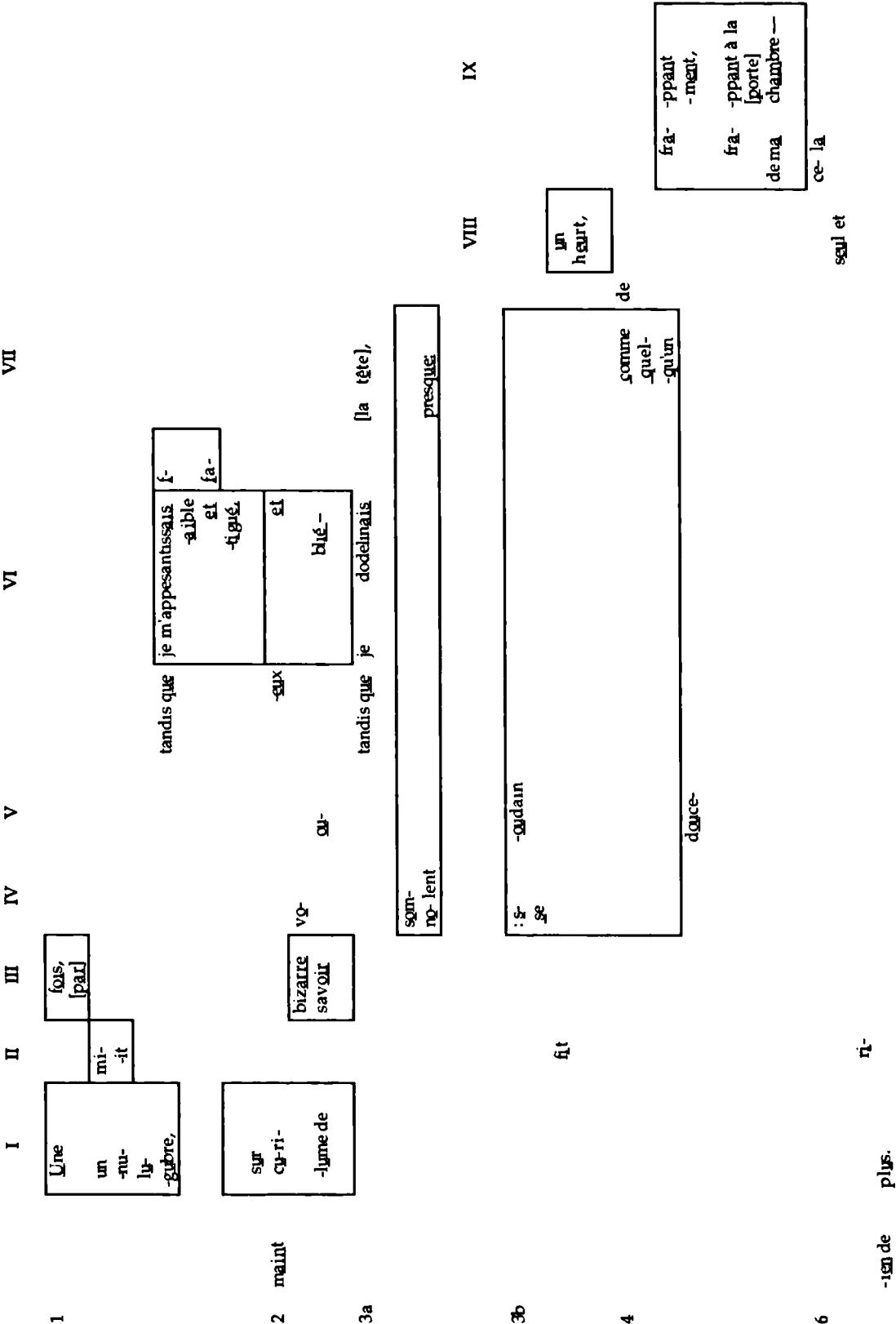


Fig. 5.5: Mallarmé, 'Le corbeau', lines 1-3:





## 6: Repetition

### *Adult Epigram*

The romance of the precise is not the elision  
Of the tired romance of impression.  
It is the ever-never-changing same,  
An appearance of Again, the diva-dame.<sup>1</sup>

**6.1** Stevens, the American poet of Symbolism, is weary of impressionism, the 'tired romance'. Precision is not achieved through the blending of impressions, their psychological overlappings, and the vagueness of impressionism does not achieve a 'higher' precision, an essence. Instead, repetition, 'Again', gives the impression ('the romance') of precision, the recurrence of 'the same', but this is both a constant and a mutation, a 'diva-dame', capricious, spontaneous, unpredictable yet predictable, and — this is the musical content of the metaphor — the persona of variation. Stevens enacts precision through repetition itself: two sentences, the first rhyming *elision/precision*, the second rhyming *same/Again/diva-dame* with the addition of an internal rhyme; this progressive tightening of the structure is reinforced by the oppositional assonance *ever-never-* on which the subject of the poem pivots. A poem about repetition, Stevens's technique tells us, is obliged to demonstrate it.

Stevens might have agreed with Freud that repetition is not the same as remembering: making an important distinction, Freud wrote that 'the compulsion to repeat is a patient's way of remembering'.<sup>2</sup> Repetition, as compulsion, expresses an absence, a lack inherent in the origin and in the repetition: the motive (or 'instinct' in Freud) for repetition is a will to wholeness, presence, completion or identity. Repetition in Freud is distinguished from a simple operation of memory, since it is an action, an event, and as in 'Adult Epigram', a structure. To this, Stevens adds, repetition is irremediably split: 'Again'

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<sup>1</sup> Wallace Stevens, *Transport to Summer* (1947), in *Collected Poems* (London: Faber, 1984), p. 353.

<sup>2</sup> Sigmund Freud, 'Remembering, repeating and working-through', in *The Standard Edition of the Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. 12, ed. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1958), p. 150.

entails both the return of the identical and the inauguration of a difference, a new form or formation. This is what makes it, in Freud, basic to the 'uncanny'.<sup>3</sup> Repetition makes the familiar strange, and uncannily, the strange appear familiar.

In a quatrain, 'Adult epigram' contains both codified and uncoded repetition, the two types theorised for 19th-century music by Lawrence Kramer.<sup>4</sup> Codified repetition is both periodic (with reference to the phrase) and formal (applying to the function of reprise). Uncoded repetition is an expressive device, a 'trope' in Kramer's terms. Thus,

a basic way to schematize the repetitions that structure works of art is to arrange them on a continuum that runs from the periodic to the uncanny or obsessive, from the measured to the fixated.<sup>5</sup>

Exploiting the language medium, it seems obvious that Stevens uses the codified structure of rhyme (*aabb*), extends Kramer's continuum toward the non-codified by adding internal rhymes, and approaches the obsessive by pervasive assonance and alliteration. All this technical display serves to enact the subject of the poem which delicately broaches repetition as a spontaneous constant — repetition in the world, memory, and (possibly) Nietzsche's eternal recurrence. However, because rhyme is not an obligatory norm for Stevens, even the codified repetitions are strategic: what appears to be 'periodic' is also 'obsessive', and what appears to be 'measured' is also 'fixated'. In this case, then, Kramer's repetition-scheme seems to break down. At least, it is seen to be exemplified in the poem, which, paradoxically, resists schematisation in the same terms because the scheme informs it ('Adult epigram' is a rare example of the poem as critical metalanguage).

The transcendence of the codified-uncoded continuum found in Stevens is a prominent feature of Modernism, even when it seems to be concretised. As I read it, 'Adult epigram' makes a statement about repetition in 19th-century art works, but in so doing transforms codified repetition into an expressive force. This is paralleled in Debussy where codified repetition seems concretised in the normative duplication of

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<sup>3</sup> Sigmund Freud, 'The uncanny', in *Art and Literature: The Pelican Freud Library, Vol. 14*, ed. Albert Dickson (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), p. 356.

<sup>4</sup> Lawrence Kramer, *Music and Poetry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

<sup>5</sup> Lawrence Kramer, *Music as Cultural Practice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p. 36.

phrases ( $a+a$ ,  $b+b$ , etc.) as an overt reification of periodicity, yet the aesthetic effect of the technique is an immense fluidity of phrase and plasticity of structure. If repetition in Debussy is normative, neither is it codified in relation to a common practice. It must therefore be a strategic device related to the uncanny and obsessive but, in my view, without being confined to either of these expressive roles. Potentially, repetition in Debussy is co-extensive with the psychological function of narrative units, repetition as an 'obsessive reminder that we cannot really move ahead until we have understood the still enigmatic past'.<sup>6</sup> While this characterisation is most obviously appropriate to the aesthetics of *Pelléas*, it also has a wider applicability in Debussy. Just as Stevens's poem demonstrates the potential for a work to embody a theoretical conceptualisation, so Debussy's repetition technique can be seen to import a philosophical model of the operation of repetition. The narrative function of repetition, I propose, arises from the embodiment in Debussy's music of the memory function of repetition in Bergson which addresses the classic dichotomies — presence and past, presence and absence — and makes a primary distinction between the mechanical and the spontaneous.

## ***Bergson 2***

**6.2** When it is not settled quickly as an illusion created by 'analysis', the reality and function of repetition is elaborated by Bergson in the theory of two types of memory, 'cerebral' memory, or habit, and 'pure' memory which records and preserves every detail of past experience. These types are defined by their relation to repetition and volition: habit is voluntary repetition *par excellence* (for example, repeating a lesson, or rehearsal), while pure memory is the involuntary image (in the present consciousness) of essentially unrepeatable elements. There can be no identical repetition in consciousness which, like *durée*, is indivisible, continuous and heterogeneous. Each moment of the past is a unique 'quality', including the past of 'habit' memory, where each voluntary and identical repetition of the event is coloured with its different circumstances held in 'pure' memory.

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<sup>6</sup> Peter Brooks, quoted in Kramer, *Music as Cultural Practice*, p. 192.

Bergson holds that matter and consciousness are not composed of individual things, and (adopting the Symbolist view) asserts that 'the universal interdependence of all [matter's] components makes the world a single thing':<sup>7</sup> for practical reasons, however, perception divides the world into discrete units. Thus, access to the past in 'pure' memory is incomplete because perception *selects* those recollections that 'shed light on the present situation and help us to react to it'.<sup>8</sup> In this way, the past becomes a conscious 'image' that blends with the present, so that in Bergson's reality there can be no pure past or pure recollection.

Each element of memory, again like *durée*, 'contains, by reason of its origin, something of what precedes and what follows'; the 'living reality' of memory is a 'continuity of becoming', a passage from the virtual state of recollection (when it is still 'cloudy', as it were, still *in* the past) to its actual state, when it 'tends to imitate perception' and is realised in the present.<sup>9</sup> The error of 'associationism'<sup>10</sup> is to replace continuity of becoming with the requirement that 'each physical state should be a kind of atom, a simple element';<sup>11</sup> associationism has 'stiffened individual memory images into ready-made things, given cut-and-dried in the course of our mental life'.<sup>12</sup> On the contrary, 'every idea that arises in the mind has a relation of similarity or contiguity with the previous mental state', and 'we should seek in vain for two ideas which have not some point of resemblance or which do not touch each other somewhere'.<sup>13</sup> Bergson's point is that we begin with perception in the present, a 'self-sufficient' image, 'by hypothesis':<sup>14</sup> only when this has occurred does the mind naturally seek correspondences in memory, which tends to accrete other ideas in 'a return to the undivided unity of perception'. Because the independent image is in fact a 'late and artificial' product of the mind, in similarity we perceive resemblance before the individuals who resemble one another (that is, we

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<sup>7</sup> Kolakowski, *Bergson* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 43-4.

<sup>8</sup> Kolakowski, *ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>9</sup> Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, p. 134.

<sup>10</sup> Bergson's term refers to atomist theories of the association of ideas (for example, as in Hume).

<sup>11</sup> Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, p. 134.

<sup>12</sup> Bergson, *ibid.*, p. 164.

<sup>13</sup> Bergson, *ibid.*, p. 163.

<sup>14</sup> Bergson, *ibid.*, p. 164.

perceive a relation of quality before the identity of objects) and then 'embroider [...] the variety of individual differences'; and in contiguity 'we go from the whole to the parts, by a process of decomposition' (that is, we perceive the contiguous items as a whole before realising that they can be distinguished). Both these operations are a pragmatic convenience that 'consists in breaking up [...] the continuity of the real'.<sup>15</sup>

Bergson's conclusion to this argument is surprising (and apparently contradictory, given the primacy of undivided perception and the perception of resemblance): 'association [...] is not the primary fact: *dissociation* is what we begin with'.<sup>16</sup> This compressed formula seems to affirm that there are no 'mysterious attractions' between objects as associationism is forced to assume, and to emphasise the uniqueness of each perception, dissociated from all others until consciousness begins to select resemblances to a present situation. We begin with a single event, search for resemblances to it in the past, thus installing the past in the present as a new perception; then, our analytic intelligence decomposes this mental whole into its parts. Bergson's disagreement with associationism therefore rests on the fact that associations are sought at the end of this process among discrete objects. On the one hand, Bergson argues against Symbolist *correspondance*, insofar as this can be identified with associationism, and on the other, he formulates *correspondance* more profoundly by installing it within involuntary, pure memory, the 'mobile', unpredictable and partial presence of the past in present perception. If there is a difference between Bergson and the Symbolists, it lies in the associationist tendency for the Symbolists to assume that *correspondance* expresses the static unity of the world as the interconnectedness of all things, whereas Bergson restricts this unity to the continuity and 'becoming' of perception, in which resemblances are not sitting discretely waiting to be discovered by a secondary, 'analytical' process, but are constituted and created in the process of becoming. Relationships of similarity and contiguity are fundamental and pervasive, but (unlike Symbolist *correspondances*) they are also unstable and impermanent. In Symbolism, this mobile, insubstantial, conception of relations is

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<sup>15</sup> Bergson, *ibid.*, p. 165.

<sup>16</sup> Bergson, *ibid.*, p. 165.



represented by the multiplicity and multi-reference of relations in the world or in language. Bergson 'completes' the Symbolist project by conceiving all problems in time rather than space; he turns attention away from the 'instant', to give relationality a 'history', and (perhaps influenced by Wyzewa's parable of music; §4.3) restores consciousness as a narrative in which nothing is fundamentally the same.

Repetition, therefore, is not a primary fact of consciousness, but is reserved for (voluntary) habit 'perfected by use',<sup>17</sup> the type of memory oriented toward action, primarily a bodily experience concerning 'sensori-motor functions alone' which are 'the greatest possible simplification of our mental life'.<sup>18</sup> Repetition exists essentially as a feature of space, opposed to the multiplicity of time, and to the 'other extremity' of consciousness, 'that which is exclusively "dreamed"', consisting of 'an indefinite multitude' of memory details associated with a perception 'limited only at the point at which we wish to stop it'.<sup>19</sup> Thus, from a Bergsonian position, repetition and resemblance define the two extremes of consciousness, where there is either complete identity or pervasive relationality. Although the one does not proceed from the other, both normally coexist in a type of consciousness between the extremes of 'pure action' and 'pure dream'.

As we have seen, however, the 'memory-image' of pure memory (as opposed to the motor-mechanisms of habit memory) is a complex entity which can be isolated only by analysis. When we return to the same image in pure memory, it is a mistake to assume that it is the same 'entity': it is a type of repetition ('the memory which retains and sets out the repetitions side by side in the form of memory images'),<sup>20</sup> in which the 'effect of repetition' is not brought to bear on 'one and the same single and indivisible phenomenon' but is the resemblance of different memory-images, each created by a new perception. This repetition is therefore a repetition in the present of this 'scanning-of-the-past', but it is impossible to say that there is a distinct entity in the past to which we repeatedly refer. The apparent solidity of a memory seems, in a sense, to be the 'solidity' of repetition itself,

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<sup>17</sup> Bergson, *ibid.*, p. 89.

<sup>18</sup> Bergson, *ibid.*, p. 166.

<sup>19</sup> Bergson, *ibid.*, p. 167.

<sup>20</sup> Bergson, *ibid.*, p. 89.

the fixing of an image because it can be repeated, not repeating it because it is fixed. Furthermore, since dissociation is what we begin with, opposition is the primary fact: consciousness, and memory, begin from difference and *proceed to* resemblance. Thus, from a Bergsonian point of view, opposition is the immediate appearance of perception, while in reality perception is undivided, each image blending with another and with the past.

**6.3** Bergson's theory of memory is primarily a theory of perception and can therefore be applied to any temporal continuum, including music, as an explanation of how cognition, and therefore coherence, arises. However, the problem of the status of discrete units and their relation to time continued to preoccupy him, and this has a bearing on any analytic enquiry. In 1907 Bergson launched a discussion of this problem with the following statement: '*a self-sufficient reality is not necessarily a reality foreign to duration*'.<sup>21</sup> What this means is that the 'Absolute' (self-sufficiency) is essentially ideal or psychological and not mathematical or logical. Thus, we must 'think being directly' by installing ourselves in duration and not seek for the absolute in logic or mathematics which force on us a 'static conception of the real'.<sup>22</sup> That this installation *in* being is difficult is due to the intellect's habit of 'think[ing] the moving by means of the immovable', which leads to our conviction that matter passes 'from a *state* to a *state*' so that we 'attach movement to a mobile [...] in order to satisfy our imagination'.<sup>23</sup> Even in our first perception of the world, 'before even we perceive our *bodies* in it', we perceive *qualities* as static (states that 'seem to persist as such') and immovable, until they are replaced by others. Although, in fact, 'every quality is change', the qualities of matter are

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<sup>21</sup> Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, p. 324. Italics in the original.

<sup>22</sup> Bergson, *ibid.*, pp. 324-5 *passim*. The proof of Bergson's argument lies in a complex consideration of 'the phantom of the nought', or nothingness. Briefly, Bergson's position is that logical conceptions of being entail that it is defined against nothingness and therefore 'numerically' (i.e., with reference to zero). This is nonsensical because the zero is added to being in order for being to transcend nothingness. He therefore concludes that 'the idea of Nothing, if we try to see in it the annihilation of all things, is self-destructive and reduced to a mere word; [...] if, on the contrary, it is truly an idea, then we find in it as much matter as in the idea of All'. Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, p. 324.

<sup>23</sup> Bergson, *ibid.*, pp. 325-7, *passim*. Italics in the original.

'so many stable views we take of its instability', and thus 'the fluid continuity of the real' is solidified by perception into 'discontinuous images'.<sup>24</sup>

Again, the Symbolist influence is clear in this aspect of Bergson's ontology. Qualities rather than things are our first perception ('color succeeds to color, sound to sound, resistance to resistance, etc.').<sup>25</sup> and the fact that these are described as 'change' defines a version of *correspondances* in which change of quality within the object grounds the appearance (or illusion) of qualities shared or transferred from one object to another. More importantly, though, such a perception of change (understood as the discontinuous, successive images of the real) leads to the assertion of their identity or perceptual repetition: when successive images differ little 'we consider them as the waxing and waning of a single *mean* image, or as the deformation of this image in different directions': and this 'mean image' is what we mean by 'the *essence* of a thing' or the thing itself.<sup>26</sup>

Here Bergson encapsulates the problem of all taxonomic analysis. If we take two units,  $A$  and  $A'$ , and assume that the second is the 'waxing or waning' of the first, the 'mean image' is neither of these but lies in the constant(s) of the two units (say  $a$  if  $A = a + a'$ , and  $A' = a + b$ ): the essence, therefore, will lie in  $a$  and its transformation. While the essence can be easily defined, the lesson to be learnt from Bergson is that the essence is either a reduction (it is not the whole of  $A$  or  $A'$ ), or it lies in  $A + A'$  taken as a single unit and therefore embraces *change* as fundamental. Any analytical method that seeks to understand  $A + A'$  will have to incorporate some sense of movement into what is essentially a 'spatialised' activity. Thus, Bergson's ontology suggests that a true understanding of  $A + A'$  must consider it as a whole, neither as  $(A, A')$  nor as  $(a + a', a + b)$ , but on a higher level as a single unit (call it  $I$ ).

Changes such as those observed between  $A$  and  $A'$  show 'the profound changes that are being accomplished within the Whole', our unit  $I$ , for example. Thus, 'we say that

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<sup>24</sup> Bergson, *ibid.*, pp. 326-8, *passim*. Italics in the original.

<sup>25</sup> Bergson, *ibid.*, p. 326.

<sup>26</sup> Bergson, *ibid.*, p. 328. Italics in the original.

they [the changes] *act* on one another',<sup>27</sup> a reciprocity that is both Symbolist and a form of movement. Habitually, though, we make the mistake of asking where this movement is going, enquiring after its teleology ('we would know above all *what* is going on, *what* the movement is doing — in other words, the *result* obtained or the presiding *intention*') which Bergson describes as the 'general plan' of complex movements and their 'motionless design'.<sup>28</sup> This is because, even when movement is the topic, the focus of attention is on form, the spatialised conception of movement of a body from A to B rather than on the movement itself. Consequently, the three categories of being that in Bergson correspond to the adjective, noun and verb are described as inaccurate 'representations' made by the intellect. These must be reconceived as aspects of 'Becoming': 'qualities' (adjectives) become 'qualitative movements', 'forms of essences' (nouns) become 'evolutionary movements', and 'acts' (verbs) become 'extensive movements'.<sup>29</sup> These three types of movements both differ profoundly from one another and encompass an infinite variety of specific movements within them. Furthermore, 'becoming' itself is not a single abstract category ('undefined becoming'): we should be content to see instead 'an infinite multiplicity of becomings variously colored, so to speak, pass[ing] before our eyes'.<sup>30</sup> At every stage, then Bergson resists the reductive.

Against this, Bergson places 'ordinary knowledge', an 'altogether practical' operation, the mechanism of which 'is of a cinematographical kind'.<sup>31</sup> Cinema is understood as 'a series of snapshots [...] instantaneous views [thrown] on the screen, so that they replace one another very rapidly'.<sup>32</sup> The frames, or static moments, are animated by movement 'in the apparatus, [...] *movement in general*, so to speak',<sup>33</sup> by the application of 'undefined becoming'. The illusion that figures on the screen are moving is therefore a cinematic 'contrivance'. Furthermore,

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<sup>27</sup> Bergson, *ibid.*, p. 329.

<sup>28</sup> Bergson, *ibid.*, p. 329.

<sup>29</sup> Bergson, *ibid.*, p. 330.

<sup>30</sup> Bergson, *ibid.*, p. 331.

<sup>31</sup> Bergson, *ibid.*, p. 332.

<sup>32</sup> Bergson, *ibid.*, p. 331.

<sup>33</sup> Bergson *ibid.*, p. 332. Italics in the original.

such is the contrivance of our knowledge. Instead of attaching ourselves to the inner becoming of things, we place ourselves outside them in order to recompose their becoming artificially.<sup>34</sup>

Because knowledge in Bergson is directed towards action ('each of our acts aims at a certain insertion of the our will into reality'), and because action is 'discontinuous, like every pulsation of life; discontinuous, therefore, is our knowledge'.<sup>35</sup> We have a 'kaleidoscopic' adaptation to reality, in which we see a succession of different arrangements, or 'pictures', static at each moment (we are uninterested in the 'shake of the kaleidoscope', so to speak, and therefore ignore the movement of which each picture is a frozen instant). Even if we concentrate on transition, a 'third view merely slips between the two others',<sup>36</sup> so that, in effect, we produce another stationary frame that explains nothing of transition itself.

**6.4** Debussy, prescient as always, seems to understand the cinema as a medium of illusion more profoundly than Bergson. Where the latter saw a succession of discrete visual states proceeding by juxtaposition, and continued to contrast melody (as the metaphor of non-spatial perception) with the contrived impression of reality given by the cinema,<sup>37</sup> Debussy perceived the continuity of discourse beneath the differential presentation inherent in the medium:

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<sup>34</sup> Bergson *ibid.*, p. 332.

<sup>35</sup> Bergson *ibid.*, p. 333.

<sup>36</sup> Bergson *ibid.*, p. 334.

<sup>37</sup> See Jann Pasler, 'Debussy, *Jeux*: playing with time and form', *19th-Century Music*, Vol. 6 (1982), p. 75, and Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes*, pp. 199-200. As I noted above (§§4.4, 4.5), because Bergson's conception of music is narrow and seems restricted to undivided spans of melody (to 'themes' perhaps), he displays no awareness of formal articulation or indeed of structure, which (in addition to its spatial representations) he might have regarded as an unwelcome infection of the intellect (Bergson's ideal music should have been, perhaps, Reich's 'music as a gradual process'). And if Bergson's discussion of *durée* is approached through its metaphors, the determining opposition seems to be music/cinema, with music as the privileged term. 'Music' refers to no actual music but to an ideal, the representation of *durée* in sound, the generality of the metaphor confirmed by the absence of a critique of specific musics (ironically, in view of Bergson's critique of universal categories, such as 'movement in general'), except for approving remarks about Wagner and Debussy. (In the Wagnerian reference, the 'discontinuity' in Wagnerian music drama is acknowledged, which may indicate the beginning of a realisation that actual music works differently from the virtual.)

There remains [...] one means of renewing the taste for symphonic music among our contemporaries: to apply to pure music the techniques of cinematography. It's the film — the film of Ariadne [*film d'Ariane*] — which is going to allow us to escape from this disquieting labyrinth.<sup>38</sup>

The pun on *fil d'Ariane*, Ariadne's thread, makes the point rhetorically: as late as 1913, Debussy returns to the Mussorgsky metaphor of 1901, the 'mysterious thread' of continuity that installs similarity within the difference between images (and between 'pure music' and cinematic technique). Langham Smith reads Debussy's comments on film as a demand for new modes of expression (images which 'defying any attempt at analysis, coalesced perfectly in the realms of imaginative reason'),<sup>39</sup> but Debussy's technical concern here is clear too — to establish new modes of continuity for musical material by analogy with the connective thread of cinematic images. In short, where Bergson concentrates on the cinematic process, Debussy seizes on the product and the 'illusion' of movement that Bergson exposes. When Jann Pasler reads *Jeux* as exemplifying the Bergsonian technique of 'continual metamorphosis' achieved 'by means of juxtaposition and discontinuity' she captures nicely the value of opposition as a means of continuity ('juxtaposed qualities of sound and time form multiple relationships impossible in an exclusively linear music'): <sup>40</sup> this continuity is a continuity of instants, which in succession gives the illusion of a metamorphosis, of change itself (Pasler calls this a 'connected' discontinuity). However, Bergson's theory is perhaps more radical than she allows. Referring to the defining motive of bars 1-4 of *Jeux*, Pasler writes that 'all the slight modifications of the motive [...] never alter its essence'.<sup>41</sup> As we have seen, this notion of essence, the 'mean image' (as Bergson describes it) of many snapshots of the event, is opposed to the purely durational, and is constructed from stable (therefore, spatially-infected) views of its instability. If Pasler's Bergsonian reading is accurate, it can be so only as a representation of our 'normal' perception — in Bergson's terms our 'habits' of

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<sup>38</sup> Debussy, 'Concerts Colonne', S.I.M., 1 November 1913. Quoted in Richard Langham Smith, 'Debussy and the art of the cinema', *Music and Letters*, Vol. 54 (1973), p. 64.

<sup>39</sup> Langham Smith, *ibid.*, p. 69.

<sup>40</sup> Pasler, 'Debussy, *Jeux*:', p. 75.

<sup>41</sup> Pasler, *ibid.*, p. 74.

perception — which Bergson's *Creative Evolution* aimed to refute: 'there is *more* in the transition than the series of states [...], *more* in the movement than the series of positions'.<sup>42</sup> The essence, Bergson argues at length, is a concept, which grounds the classical doctrine of Forms (or Ideas): this philosophy and all concepts are opposed to, and in fact deny, 'becoming', the means by which matter embodies *durée*. Ideas are 'screened from the laws of time';<sup>43</sup> 'they enter into eternity [...], but what is eternal in them is just what is unreal',<sup>44</sup> that is to say, their specious essence. Only the 'degradation', or imperfection in reality of the immutable Ideas animates them in time, makes them temporal and produced the 'perpetual flux of things'. Thus Pasler's 'metamorphosis', as it is represented in analysis, exists in time, in the music, only through differences from the essential. (In thought itself, this demonstrates the truth of Derrida's *différance*, where difference 'becomes' deferral, and the spatial (or eternal) becomes temporal; see Ch. 3.)

**6.5** Bergson's analysis of analysis, the workings of the intellect, is therefore implicitly a critique of all music analysis, even of techniques predicated on theories of motion. Any theory that requires or insists on a visual representation is automatically constricted by the 'discontinuous' nature of spatial representation: even if such representations are conceived as metaphorical, the danger is that the metaphor will be taken literally.<sup>45</sup> A concept, too, even a concept of motion is 'discontinuous', a static image: a concept can never place us in duration or movement, except perhaps (as Bergson shows) negatively, by demonstrating how static our concepts of change really are. This is designed to blow any analytic enterprise out of the water: it fatally destabilises Saussurean structuralism *avant l'événement* and undermines any classificatory system, even one considered as a system of differences without positive terms (as in Saussure's description of language).<sup>46</sup> Difference

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<sup>42</sup> Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, pp. 340-1.

<sup>43</sup> Bergson, *ibid.*, p. 342.

<sup>44</sup> Bergson, *ibid.*, p. 344.

<sup>45</sup> As is the case in the current fashion for making a consistent theorist of Schenker, in the standardisation of notation and the search for constancy and well-formed Schenkerian concepts. See, for example, Charles J. Smith, 'Musical form and fundamental structure: an investigation of Schenker's *Formenlehre*', *Music Analysis*, Vol. 15 (1996), pp. 191-300.

<sup>46</sup> That is to say, a system containing differences in which no term is given priority. This is unquestioned at the phonemic level, but is the focus of post-structuralist critiques of Saussure's binary

implies discontinuity, and even if difference is taken to be neutral, it tends to introduce 'positivity' as a consequence of the reification inherent in relationally-defined discreteness. Music, as we have seen, is the Bergsonian ideal (Jankélévitch refers to the 'musical' character of Bergson's thought)<sup>47</sup> and is the image of *durée*: any operation of the intellect applied to it can be, from a Bergsonian point of view, only a misrepresentation of its true nature.

The reading of the situation above leads the analyst into a negation whose irony Debussy might have relished. He, like Bergson, would probably have insisted that we simply place ourselves in *durée*, in the musical work, in which installation its 'real' experience lies. This, however, would be to assume that there is no thought, no intellectual operation, in the art work. Let us accept, then, a simple truth: the essence of a form (for example, a motive) is conceptual; it is therefore not inherently musical (although it is sonorous), and is certainly not to be confused with the musical 'idea' (in Schoenberg's sense of the term). Consequently, like Debussy, we would need to accept that the 'becoming' of the musical work is an illusion in the same way as movement in film is an illusion: music is generated by the animation of the conceptual, while film develops from the animation of the spatial. This impresses me as the fundamental illusion of Symbolist art as predicted on a revival of the Platonic Ideal Forms. If the Symbolist 'Idea' is an ideal impossible to realise in language, sound, or image, it can be communicated only if *correspondances* are conceived as mobile, as effecting movement from quality to quality, and from one dimension of reality to another. The artistic illusion here is that of movement itself which occurs only in the mind, and therefore conceptually, as the perpetual grasping for an unnameable essence. This is what Bergson means when he insists that the 'absolute' — in this context, the Symbolist Idea embodied in its *correspondances* — is specifically a psychological reality. A distinctive feature of the Symbolist symbol, therefore, is that is internally mobile, and the relations it contains are not static (pictorial) but in motion (musical) (§3.6).

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opposition of morphemes and signifieds in which one term is normally privileged in the cultural context of any language. In this way, notably in Lévi-Strauss's analysis of myth, the theoretical neutrality of structuralism can be revealed to be politicised and enculturated.

<sup>47</sup> Vladimir Jankélévitch, *Henri Bergson* (Paris: PUF, 1959), p. 3.



Assuming that Bergson's 'music' is primarily the music of Wagner, and that Debussy's style developed largely in opposition to Wagner, Debussy's response to these compositional and aesthetic influences is necessarily complex. Wagner's ideal, 'melody is form',<sup>48</sup> is well known, specifically the 'endless melody' he found in Beethoven and applied as a compositional technique from *Das Rheingold* onwards as an antidote to 'quadratic' or periodic form, which is either too regular, involves a high degree of exact repetition, or (as in Italian opera) requires 'melody' (as form) to break off for episodes of mere padding. In response, Debussy did two things. Firstly, in a conservative-radical move, 'endless melody' is replaced by arabesque (its not dissimilar form) as a formal category: this can best be defined as a melodic, linear form which is not periodic and (against Wagner) not developmental. Above all, arabesque avoids sequence and structural repetition (that is, repetition on the level of the phrase: smaller atomic repetitions are always present). Secondly, and surprisingly, 'quadratic form' is restored with a vengeance, as an initial, radical move against developing variation and towards atomisation. Debussy reaffirms the compositional value of atomic repetition since, as Bergson had shown, this is necessary and inescapable.<sup>49</sup>

The most significant Bergsonian feature to emerge from this is the reassertion of the value of the atomic, the 'instant', defined negatively in Bergson as the product of spatial thinking about time, but positively in Bachelard who (in reaction to Bergson) argues for its restoration.<sup>50</sup> Glossing *correspondances*, Bachelard defines the instant as a complex unity that unites near and distant events in a 'simultaneity' (this, I think, is how it begins to become conceptualised, reified in a concept). This rehabilitation asserts the value of units of significance demoted as 'merely intellectual' by Bergson, and, I suggest, restores a degree of respectability to the atomic analysis of Debussy — not merely at the lowest level, in which repetition resolves into the triviality of undifferentiated identity, but in relation to the text, in which the smallest music-word-image simultaneities become

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<sup>48</sup> See Thomas E. Grey, *Wagner's Musical Prose* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 270-304.

<sup>49</sup> This is also what is most easily revealed by analysis, and is the type of triviality that may have grounded Debussy's well-known contempt for 'analysis'.

<sup>50</sup> See Gaston Bachelard, *La dialectique de la durée* (Paris: PUF, 1950), pp. 1-30.

pregnant, and once they are brought into relation with other units, semiotically energised. Two such units set up a 'symbolic' resonance which can be renewed or disseminated in the score. There is no developing variation or other organic development: meaning is accumulated rather than created, significance is accreted rather than secreted or revealed. Thus, when Dahlhaus speaks of Debussy's thematic structure working by 'retraction' (reduction), in which something is subtracted (§5.1), this now appears as rather too crude an opposition to Wagnerian development: the *Leitmotive* to which Dahlhaus refers are atomised rather than reduced, so that their features are left to float free of the interdependent consistency within the *Leitmotive*-as-symbol. In turn, this leads to a new relation of whole and part: the parts have a semi-independent significance (the potential to enter into signifying wholes), and are not dependent on the whole for their significance. The relation of two wholes is similarly complex: where two opposed units, *A* and *B*, are related *on the surface* (not 'merely analytically'), they are opposed yet connected, as if identity and difference were always being simultaneously asserted.

By way of illustration, take the repetition structure (*A*, *A'*). The problem is that this seems either static or we conceive it as having, or attempting to create, a forward progression. On the surface Debussy seems to assert Bergson's 'discontinuity' which is a property of space, the 'real', action, the body, and 'intellect' (by which Bergson meant the rational or analytic faculty) — in short everything that is understood as divisible and discrete. As we have seen, the obverse of this would be an undifferentiated 'flowing' corresponding to *durée*, the 'purely' temporal structure which Wagner was perceived to aim towards, and which Debussy tried to capture, perhaps, in the 'sinuous' nature of arabesque (the opening of the *Prélude à 'L'après-midi d'un faune'* is a good example). However, even Bergson does not insist that continuity as duration, an uninterrupted flowing, is undifferentiated, nor that it does not contain repetitions. His account of memory, dependent on association (from the present to the past), admits at least that the very realisation of similarity implies some type of articulation (*A...A'...* etc.) of the similar and the different, except that, at the experiential moment, this differentiation is not recognised: it becomes evident only on reflection, once the intellect analyses — again, in

memory — the course of psychic events. Thus an accurate 'representation' or symbolisation of *durée* in music will contain articulations, and must do so, since it is a product of the intellect (Bergson says that we cannot think evolution, which is *durée* itself).<sup>51</sup>

With this background, Bergson's characteristic repetition structure (A' followed by A) can be better understood: A' is a 'memory' of A, refers back to it, and in the process (of course) transforms it. Transposed into visual or spatial terms, the structure can be seen also to exemplify Bergson's analysis of the reality of matter as 'image', which is 'more than that which the idealist calls a *representation*, but less than that which the realist calls a *thing*':<sup>52</sup> the two functions interact 'according to the laws of nature, or at least appear to do so'.<sup>53</sup> This is the basis of Bergson's neither purely materialist nor idealist ontology in which matter exists, as it were psychically, somewhere between mimesis and the purely material. If this primary fact were to be reflected in music, one would have to state the 'thing' (A) and its representation (A'), with the 'image' (as discussed above) existing only in the complex (A, A'). What is normally taken to be repetition (i.e. when we concentrate on the sequence of events alone) is in Bergson a subtly varied duality which exists primarily on a level above the atomic.

**6.6** Many aspects of Bergson's concept of relationality can be discerned in the varied repetitions and oppositions of Debussy's Prelude. Unlike Wagner's music, in which 'endless melody' mimics the 'continuity of the real' and therefore might seem to be the more Bergsonian, the surface of Debussy's music asserts the primacy of dissociation as the immediate articulated musical reality which nevertheless aspires to the condition of undivided perception, or *durée*. This Bergsonism surfaces in André Schaeffner's description of the essence of Debussy's compositional method:

Debussy's first essays in composition show him ready to receive [...] any suggestion in order to establish relations at least of contiguity between what he had been so assiduous in dissolving. From the compartmentalisation [*morcellement*] of form he

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<sup>51</sup> Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, passim.

<sup>52</sup> Bergson, *Matter and Memory*. Quoted in A. R. Lacey, *Bergson* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 89.

<sup>53</sup> Lacey, *ibid.*, p. 89.

would then combine the subtlety of the connections [*articulations*]. When he wrote that form in Mussorgsky 'is built up by small details in succession, related by a mysterious thread and by a gift of enlightened clairvoyance',<sup>54</sup> Debussy himself had already shown, notably in *Pelléas* and the *Nocturnes*, an equal, if not superior gift of making interdependent [*solidaire*] that which presents no immediate connection [*liaison*] [...] the Russian influence alone led Debussy to compartmentalise form to an extreme degree. From 1879 onwards, César Cui reproached Rimsky Korsakov for a procedure often thereafter criticised in Debussy, a procedure that consists in systematically doubling each melodic phrase; perhaps it was from the author of *Pskovitaine* that Debussy borrowed this motivic reduplication as a way of divesting himself of the development he detested. Stated twice, each phrase gives way to another with (of course) a subtle relation [*filiation*] to the first. Before Debussy, only Mussorgsky among the Russians had grasped the sensitive quality of notes themselves and had discovered the secret of musical connection [*enchainement*] in their reciprocal attraction.<sup>55</sup>

Schäffner circles around Bergson's two primary relations, contiguity and similarity, in the attempt to pin down the relational in a style of dissociation. Contiguity exists between opposed elements arising from the 'dissolution' of form (*morcellement* is, literally, form 'in pieces'), the interdependence of opposed fragments, and the expressive identity (*qualité sensible*) of individual pitches which maintain musical continuity through a 'mysterious' reciprocal attraction. Similarity is present in the systematic doubling of each melodic phrase, a reduplication that rejects development, and in the two-fold duplication of phrases followed by oppositions subtly related to them. The mechanism of systematic doubling paralyses development in the traditional sense and defines the ground of subtle relations. This double operation of repetition both grounds the structure and, by delaying progression and installing differences, operates as its 'unground';<sup>56</sup> and it seems to exemplify Bergson's notion that identical repetition is impossible in consciousness, so that the varied repetitions are the counterpart of the memory images of a past event. The function of difference or opposition, on the other hand, is to ground both similarity and

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<sup>54</sup> *Revue blanche*, 15 April 1901.

<sup>55</sup> André Schaeffner, 'Debussy et la musique russe', in *Musique Russe*, Vol. 1 (Paris: PUF, 1953), p. 135.

<sup>56</sup> The term is taken from Rodolphe Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror: Derrida and the Philosophy of Reflection* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), pp. 154-63.

contiguity by replacing development with the interdependence of apparently unconnected units (Schaeffner's *filiation* and *enchainement*), and with a 'secret' musical process of musical connection through reciprocal attraction — processes that take place underneath surface discontinuity.

However, the categories of Schaeffner's description are (necessarily) blurred: similarity involves difference, while mere contiguity is superseded by the firm connections ('mysterious attractions' and 'secret thread') of opposed units. Repetition in this style therefore seems to have a disruptive and creative function, one which accords with Bergson's view that 'musical beings are like living beings that compensate for their individuating closure by an openness created by modulation, repetition, transposition, [and] juxtaposition'.<sup>57</sup> Identity ('repetition'), opposition ('juxtaposition') and simple transformation ('modulation' and 'transposition') can therefore be read as devices for de-structuring structure, opening it out beyond its ground to its unground, and for escaping its necessary but self-limiting frames.

**6.7** Ruwet notes that Schaeffner fails to indicate how and why development is avoided by 'duplication', a technique that in Schaeffner 'remains on a historical, not structural level'.<sup>58</sup> Ruwet's 'purely internal, synchronic study' seems to be focussed on the 'multiple forms of repetition on different levels',<sup>59</sup> even though the main body of his text is devoted to the interdependence of opposed material emphasised by Schaeffner, material that is beyond the scope of Ruwet's distributional method and which eventually undermines it.<sup>60</sup> Reading Schaeffner, Ruwet selects some basic issues, picking the structuralist plums out of the paragraph. At first, Ruwet avoids the term *répétition*: he

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<sup>57</sup> Quoted in Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, trans. Graham Burchill and Hugh Tomlinson (London: Verso, 1994), p. 190. The authors give no primary source for their quotation.

<sup>58</sup> Ruwet, 'Duplications' p. 71.

<sup>59</sup> Ruwet, *ibid.*, p. 71.

<sup>60</sup> Ruwet's later text 'Théorie et méthodes dans les études musicales', *Musique en jeu*, No. 17 (1975), pp. 11-36, rejected this model for a more flexible Popperian falsifiability.

prefers *duplication* which is signalled as a specific term referring to the immediate repetition of a unit, a minimal structure of equivalence.<sup>61</sup> *Duplication* refers to

multiple forms of *répétition* situated on different levels of the structure of a work, which are embedded [*s'emboîtent*] in one another. [...] We have no right to put in the same class *répétitions* situated on the level of the motive, those on the level of the phrase, nor those on the level of the period. [...] The essential point is that the doubled entity must be sufficiently short to appear quite unique perceptually, of such a type that the *duplication* cannot be perceived as a *reprise*. The notion of *reprise* always implies in effect that a certain unfolding [*déroulement*] has occurred'.<sup>62</sup>

A *duplication* then is *répétition* on the lowest level, a *reprise* is a formal category which implies a return to the point of departure. However, later we learn that '*duplication* is also, generally speaking, used to create complex relations "at a distance"',<sup>63</sup> and that '*duplication* often introduces subtle variations', countering the common assumption that among the doubled entities there is 'an apparently complete identity between the *répétition* and the repeated [*répété*]'.<sup>64</sup> As Kinariwala has shown, the semantic overlapping of terms for which specific and distinct meanings are claimed means that Ruwet displaces the question of doubling from its true location, the distinction between the semantic fields of *duplication*, *reduplication*, doubling and repetition.<sup>65</sup> The apparently specific meanings of these terms are condensed into the generic term that eludes definition — *répétition* — which escapes reification as a category, and is the latent signifier into which its ostensible synonyms dissolve. Ruwet's varied restatements of the problem of repetition ensure that, for all the surface evolution of the argument, *répétition* is simply repeated and doubled: it

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<sup>61</sup> Ruwet, 'Duplications', p. 70. The term *reduplication* used by Schaeffner goes unremarked. This (unconscious?) doubling of *duplication* indicates an area of blindness: repetition turns on itself, it is not merely duplication but a doubled doubling, or re-doubling itself. Consequently, the form *doubler* becomes problematic. Schaeffner's '*doubler systématiquement*' appears straightforwardly as the verbal equivalent of the noun *duplication*, but Ruwet perceives a contradiction. Speaking of '*éléments doublés et non doublés*' he comments that he would prefer the neologism *dupliquer* in order to avoid confusion with 'the meaning the word carries elsewhere in musical language', referring of course to an increase in tempo (*ibid.*, p. 74).

<sup>62</sup> Ruwet, *ibid.*, pp. 71-2. Ruwet's French terms are left untranslated here.

<sup>63</sup> Ruwet, *ibid.*, p. 73. Ruwet identifies the repetition in 'Danse de Puck' of a duplication formula separated by 20 bars, conforming to his definition of a *reprise*.

<sup>64</sup> Ruwet, *ibid.*, p. 72.

<sup>65</sup> Neela Delia Kinariwala, 'Debussy and musical coherence: a study of succession and continuity in the Preludes (PhD diss., University of Texas at Austin, 1987).

refuses to develop as a concept and betrays an anxiety concerning the non-developmental function of repetition in Debussy, repetition as a mechanical procedure, a 'compositional "cliché"',<sup>66</sup> of which the unwelcome, and un-named, signified is 'automatism'.

Ruwet attempts to avoid the danger of the automatic by raising repetition to a more general, pervasive function. In bars 1-6 of the *Prelude* he wonders whether there is a relation (*rapport*) between repetition and opposition: 'Doesn't the function of duplication consist in establishing a formal equivalence between heterogeneous elements with respect to their material?'<sup>67</sup> A device of phrase structure, for example  $(a+a) + (b+b)$ , establishes *formal* relationship between oppositions (in the *Prelude*, 'abruptly contrasted *material* from different musical worlds' separated by 'an abyss').<sup>68</sup> In addition, 'duplication often introduces subtle variations that stand out all the more clearly because they are presented on an identical ground [*fond*]'.<sup>69</sup> Thus there seem to be two types of duplication function: formal and transformational. Although Ruwet does not use the term 'resemblance', *duplication* is a neologism invented to capture the primary functions of resemblance — identity and difference. Identity is consolidated in the formal category (on a higher level of the hierarchy), while difference is reserved for the variation of the pitch and rhythmic content of single units on the lowest level.

Fig. 6.1 summarises the details of Ruwet's verbal analysis which operates on the twin axes of formal correspondence ('symmetrical' 2:1 durational proportions, and 'asymmetrical' deviant units) and transformational elements of variation:

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<sup>66</sup> Ruwet, 'Duplications', p. 99.

<sup>67</sup> Ruwet, *ibid.*, p. 73.

<sup>68</sup> Ruwet, *ibid.*, p. 91.

<sup>69</sup> Ruwet, *ibid.*, p. 73.

Fig. 6.1

A 2:1 correspondence	B asymmetry
$a+a' + b+b'$ 4 + 2 strings + wind D-C Ab diatonic whole-tone	c 1 timpani roll Ab
$a1+a1' + b1+b1'$ 4 + 2 strings + wind D-F Bb	$d+d + e$ 2 + 2 timpani roll Bb
$f+f + g$ 2 + 1 [A — G] ascending	
$h+h + i$ 2 + 1 D-C Bb descending diatonic whole-tone	

Paradigm A reveals correspondences between 2:1 proportions, instrumentation, bass progression (D-Ab, D-Bb) and, in the last two sequences ( $f+f+g$ ,  $h+h+i$ ), an inversion of melodic contour and dynamics. Paradigm B shows the two 'asymmetrical' units associated by the timpani roll and the prolongation of the bass note from the respective preceding unit (Ab, Bb). Thus, the scheme captures some of the melodic relationships, but in subordinating this dimension to harmonic, durational and dynamic relations it distorts the oppositions basic to the melodic analysis presented in Ruwet's own table (§8.7, Ex. 11).

This oppositional ambiguity among the parameters is perhaps why Ruwet's focus is difficult to define. It is never quite clear whether repetition or variation is the structural principle, since duplication involves both: is rational, distributional regularity subverted by irrational heterogeneity, or does it dominate? In the end, Debussy's 'modes of connection [that] can completely change the physiognomy of something that at first appears to be a succession of strict duplications' is an innovation that seems to be the product of a methodological dogma. When Ruwet comments that in his first analytical forays 'we have proceeded as if duplications had a real autonomy, and on this basis we attempted to determine their function, that is, the relations they entertain with other



elements',<sup>70</sup> he does so in order to reject the concentration on the instant. Saussure is then invoked in order to support the preferred procedure, beginning from the 'complete whole in order to obtain by analysis the elements it contains',<sup>71</sup> and to correct the 'illusion' of analysing as if a system could be constructed from its elements. And when Ruwet applies this classic structuralist method to the various parameters, he ends up with divergent systems of organisation which produce, so to speak, parametrical ambiguity: some interparametrical simultaneities correspond while others are contradictory. Thus we arrive at the normative view of Debussian structure as stratified, in which transformations of the physiognomy of a unit are explained by changes of context, that is, by what lies outside it.<sup>72</sup> Although this is a plausible explanation of compositional process, it leaves open the question of moment-to-moment continuity, and glosses over the issue of how, in its totality, one unit is related functionally to the next.<sup>73</sup>

**6.8** It is precisely the 'illusion' of a system arising from its elements that I want to explore. In the event, Ruwet fails to examine the structural consequences of the fact that (in Debussy's *Fêtes*) 'duplications are inextricably linked with elements of variation',<sup>74</sup> and those of his speculation that duplication might be 'a structural transformation of imitation, corresponding to a shift from "horizontal" to "vertical" style'.<sup>75</sup> As Ruwet acknowledged in a later article connections and variations such as those found in the Prelude are irrational,<sup>76</sup> at once beyond and central to the structure, in Derrida's terms both its ground and the unground. But they lead inexorably to the 'deeper and deeper analyses' that, in a

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<sup>70</sup> Ruwet, *ibid.*, p. 74.

<sup>71</sup> Ruwet, *ibid.*, p. 74.

<sup>72</sup> Carried to its ultimate conclusion, this type of structuralist analysis exposes a groundwork — the autonomy of parameters — and reveals Debussy as the precursor of Messiaen and the integral serialists.

<sup>73</sup> A recent, sensitive attempt to conceptualise the functional relations of repeated blocks of material is found in Simon Trezise, *Debussy: La mer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 76-82. Trezise considers the large-scale phrase structure of 'Jeux de vagues' as operating functionally by 'passive continuation' (±), 'deflection' (!), 'active continuation' (+), and transition ('leading to', [>]). Schematically, the piece is described (p. 78) as follows: Parts 1+2: 2 ± 2 ! 2 ± 2

Parts 3+4: 2 + 2 > 2 + 2.

<sup>74</sup> Ruwet, *ibid.*, p. 87.

<sup>75</sup> Ruwet, *ibid.*, p. 74.

<sup>76</sup> See Nicholas Ruwet, 'Methods of analysis in musicology' [1966], trans. Mark Everist, *Music Analysis*, Vol. 6, Nos 1-2 (1987), pp. 3-36. Ruwet contrasts such 'asymmetrical' units that 'encroach on one another' with the durational symmetry characteristic of larger units (p. 22).

theoretically-responsible but rhetorical flourish, Ruwet declares as putting an end to structuralist 'declarations of principle' and to 'inaugural manifestos'.<sup>77</sup> Furthermore, the duplications involve 'complex, multiple relations with all aspects of the Prelude, making it impossible to regard repetition as a mechanical procedure or a compositional "cliché"'.<sup>78</sup> Contradicting the hegemony of regularity elsewhere, Ruwet implies here that the 'dialectic of the repeated and the non-repeated',<sup>79</sup> is only one type of commensurability.<sup>80</sup> Duplication's formal function is only one function, complicated and undone by smaller-scale relationships among contiguous or dispersed units.

Procedurally, Ruwet nominates this single, formal function as the dominant structural principle (it is his Derridean 'transcendental signified'), subjecting connection to opposition, syntagm to paradigm, and the elements to the system. This raises the ontological chicken-and-egg question: which came first, the system or the material? and, in analysis, which of these is primary? Here we stray into Adorno territory to encounter the dialectical mediation of schemata and what is going on beneath the schemata, a mediation that is neither the product of the schemata nor a separate thing.<sup>81</sup> Adorno, and Ruwet by implication, treat this question universally: my enquiry is predicated on the assumption that there is something systematic about the relations of material *in Debussy* but this is not a dominating system, or a principle, but a systematicity beyond systems.

Derrida's name for such non-systematic, overdetermined repetition is 'dissemination', exemplified in the classic analysis of Mallarmé's *Or* (1893)<sup>82</sup> which Mallarmé first published in the year Debussy began work on *Pelléas*. The French *or* means either 'gold/golden' (noun/adjective) or 'now' (as a conjunction marking the turning point in an argument); Mallarmé's text plays on this double sense and with the occurrence of the phoneme in larger signifiers (*hors, horizon, majore, fantasmagorique*). *Or* is disseminated through the text as a type of supplement. It is not a rhyme-in-prose since its

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<sup>77</sup> Ruwet, 'Duplications', p. 99.

<sup>78</sup> Ruwet, *ibid.*, p. 99.

<sup>79</sup> Ruwet, *ibid.*, p. 91.

<sup>80</sup> See Ruwet, *ibid.*, p. 92.

<sup>81</sup> See Theodor Adorno, 'On the problem of musical analysis', p. 173.

<sup>82</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), p. 262, n. 62.

function is neither formal nor to relate the signifieds of the signifiers in which it appears; but as an 'addition' to the signifiers *or* takes on a life of its own, a repetition-function that reduces the meaning of 'gold' to mere 'currency' — or as Mallarmé writes, it 'loses even a meaning'.<sup>83</sup> Derrida comments that *or* is therefore 'orchestrated in the full range of its registers': the musical analogy is occasioned by *or*'s dissemination in other works by Mallarmé (its influence extends beyond the borders of the single work), notably in *Igitur* (1869) where the phrase *son or* ('his/her/its gold') can be heard also as *sonore* ('sonorous', 'sounding') and as *son or* ('... sound/gold, or...'). Music, Derrida remarks, 'is almost always golden' for Mallarmé.<sup>84</sup> Thus *or*'s grammatical ambiguity (noun, adverb of time, logical conjunction) is 'a veritable throw of syntactic dice — Mallarmé's syntax organises its [*or*'s] polysemy, and its orchestral polyphony, but also, most particularly, its out-of-line ex-centricity, its brilliant suspension [of meaning]'.<sup>85</sup>

It is important to realise, though, that *or* is not simply projected or disseminated in the text as a dispensable addition to the level of the signifiers. A supplement is also a substitution or replacement, and this side of its operation ensures that its movement toward asemy (meaningless in itself) is counterweighted by the impulse toward polysemy (overdetermined meaning). *Or* gathers to itself signifiers that contain it: the 'effect' is a musicality of prose, but the process is a conceptual collage which must be made meaningful through syntax. In Debussy, the insistent free play of recurrence owes something to Mallarmé's centrifugal use of repetition, in that larger units (themes, motives) are not so much made coherent by their mutual repeated features but are oriented around them, as if the themes, like words, were ready-mades whose co-existence in a single structure is made possible, but not necessary, by the minimal units selected for repetition in different 'syntactic' contexts. A poetic rather than developmental (contingent rather than necessary) attitude to composition ensues: musical ideas are not organically developed or unified but are related by the supplemental logic of their parts. The poet, an anglophone Mallarmé perhaps, who plays on 'or' is offered in language: horizon,

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<sup>83</sup> Stéphane Mallarmé, *Oeuvres complètes*, p. 398.

<sup>84</sup> Derrida, *Dissemination*, p. 263, n. 62.

<sup>85</sup> Derrida, *ibid.*, p. 263, n. 62.

fantasmagoric, before, no more (and thus 'gnome, or'), contortion (and thus 'contour, shun'), organise, and so on. Poetry, or Joycean prose, can be made from these *objets trouvés* selected for the sound they contain, not primarily for their meanings: the latter are unleashed subsequently, and this liberation will be partly determined by the tension set up by their unexpected conjunction. The function of repetition in such a context, poetic or musical, is not to install a level of coherence but to discover relations between artificially-conjoined terms. In short, it could be said that such an artistic product will proceed using repetition as the ground of structural puns, a primary operation of unconscious association in Lacanian theory.

Since the difference between music and literature is the absence of a determinate sense produced by such sonic repetition, the punning facility retreats immediately to the automatic, a base level of recurrence: repetition for itself. Analytically, this has eased the turn from the rhyme-function of poetry to the reason-function of musical structure, on the assumption that repetition is its own justification: this is the 'entrenched move' with which Carolyn Abbate charges music analysis in general,<sup>86</sup> one that erases differences in style, technique and structure.

**6.9** Ruwet details in prose the elements of free play that challenge regularity and the structural control of the transcendental principle. However, the principle of dialectical repetition, Nattiez's revisions, and Nattiez's procedure in general, attempt to formalise these elements by creating a more extensive network of paradigmatic relationships,<sup>87</sup> those that are left playing relatively freely in Ruwet. In this respect, Nattiez is more, not less, 'structuralist' than Ruwet. Both analysts, though, are prevented by their descriptive taxonomic method from enquiring into the function, not simply the control, of irrational elements. The structuralist assumption that 'decomposition' of units and parameters (Ruwet) or the 'autonomization of variables' (Nattiez) is fundamental to an analytical

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<sup>86</sup> Carolyn Abbate, *Unsung Voices*, p. 176. Tarasti makes the same point: 'repetition has in all structural analyses served as the starting point for exploring a work of art and its style'. Tarasti, *Semiotics*, p. 281.

<sup>87</sup> See in particular Jean-Jacques Nattiez, 'An analysis of Debussy's *Syrinx*', *Toronto Semiotic Circle: Monographs, Working Papers and Pre-publications*, No. 4 (Toronto: Victoria University, 1982), pp. 1-35.

picture of structure leads to a mania for classification and to the separation of interdependent parametrical features — and thus to a palimpsest of descriptions. The result is a confusing and compromised clarity.

The following sequence of experimental analyses (Exs 8-10) is intended to illustrate the issues at stake. An analysis beginning with the longest repeated units<sup>88</sup> reveals the structure shown in Ex. 8 (represented schematically as Fig. 6.2):

Fig. 6.2<sup>89</sup>

Level 1:	I	+	II
Level 2:	A	+	B + x
Level 3:	(a+a1)	+	(b+b1) + x

The bar line is respected as an inviolable point of articulation. The levels are characterised by either repetition (identity) or difference (opposition): level 1 is the level of identity ( $I+II$ ), level 2 presents opposition ( $A+B$ ), and level 3 identity ( $a+a1$ , etc.). All levels reveal a similar organisation since they operate with a maximum of two terms (ignoring for the moment the hapax  $x$ ). This apparent hierarchical similarity is disturbed by the fact that level 2 presents opposition only, within the level 1 units. However, levels 2 and 3 are closely related since  $A$  comprises  $(a+a1)$  and  $B$  comprises  $(b+b1)$ : repetition on level 3 therefore defines the opposition of level 2. In summary, the analyst must move to the lower level 3 to explain the opposition on level 2 produced by the segmentation of identity on level 1. Level 2, defining opposition, is therefore sandwiched between levels 1 and 3 which define repetition. However, the structure of opposition on level 2 is not the point at issue: without this installation of difference there could be no structure, in the ordinary sense of the term.

The principal objection to the scheme (Fig. 6.2) is that is indistinguishable from similar analyses of most other pieces. There is always a large-scale regularity (as in

<sup>88</sup> As in Ruwet, 'Methods of analysis', pp. 3-36.

<sup>89</sup> The units in Fig. 6.2 reproduce Ruwet's (as shown in Ex. 11 below), but the nomenclature here is different. Transformations are indicated by arabic numerals, exact repetitions by the identical letter name.

Schoenberg's sentence or period phrase structures); these higher-level repetitions always break into opposed units on the next level; and these opposed units are always dissolvable into small-scale repetitions. Secondly, in Fig. 6.2, there is only one exact repetition on level 2 ( $A$  and  $A$ ) and two on level 3 ( $a$  and  $a$ ,  $aI$  and  $aI$ ): these relations cut across the boundary of composite units (indicated by the brackets) and disturb the unity of  $A$  and  $A$  (level 2) and  $I$  and  $II$  (level 1). A distinction must therefore be made between hierarchical repetition —  $(a+aI) = A$ , repeated on level 2 — and non-sequential repetition on a single level. Ruwet would say that  $(a+aI)$  is a 'bloc', a larger unit whose parts have no direct relationship to the parts of other units. This overlaps with Bergson's requirements insofar that the units in a repetition structure are not to be isolated functionally, but differs from Bergson in that Ruwet's bloc is itself a unit, and therefore merely transfers the atomic to a higher level. Both Ruwet and Bergson would restrict the referential capacity of material to immediate repetition, and would not allow for the possibility that non-sequential repetition might create relations by analogy with Mallarmé's *-or-*.

In fact, when the analysis is continued to a fourth level (Ex.9, Fig. 6.3), the non-sequential repetitions of level 3 are revealed as obsessively similar:

Fig. 6.3

Level 3:  $(a + aI) + (b + bI) + x \text{ etc.}$

Level 4:  $(p+q) + (pI+q) + (qI+q2+q3) + (q4+q2+q5) + q6 (=x)$

(where the bar line is still respected, but equal divisions within the bar are allowed).

The pervasive, immediate repetition on level 4 undermines the structural regularity of opposition on level 3 which appears to dissolve into a chain of immediate repetitions of the neighbour note (and  $x$  comes into focus as a further repetition of  $q$ ). The issue here is whether the dissolution in Ex. 6.3 is a structural feature or whether it is a *reductio ad absurdum* that reveals only a generic pattern produced by the method of analysis as a reduction to nothingness.

## 6.10

*Model toward a theory of cognition* <sup>90</sup>

Here is a box for you,	you will find,
a large box,	after infinite efforts, an infinitely small
labeled	box
Box.	with a label
Open it,	so tiny
and you will find	that the lettering,
a box in it,	as it were,
labeled	dissolves
Box from a box.	before your eyes.
Look into it	It is a box
(I mean this box now,	existing only
not the other one),	in your imagination.
and you will find a box	A perfectly empty
labeled	box.
And so on,	
and if you go on	
like this,	

While the primary referent of Enzensberger's metaphor is the ineffability of consciousness ('Box'), — the 'theory of cognition' ends in a negative result ('a perfectly empty box') — the poem can also be read as an allegory of the analytical process of Fig. 6.3 which pushes Ruwet's method to its ultimate conclusion. Decomposing large units (of meaning) will always result in the identification of pre-signifying units (there is a 'box' at the end of the process, but it is imaginary and empty). This why Nattiez rejects the notion that the musical note and the linguistic phoneme are analogous: the note exists beneath the threshold of difference (transposition alone remains) while the field of difference among the phonemes is more expansive (§3.1). The neighbour-note structure, too, is minimal and insufficiently differential to articulate meaning in any sequence. Thus, from a structural point of view, Enzensberger's fable of the mystery of cognition suggests that exact repetition has no consequential function in the structure. Exact repetition defines

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<sup>90</sup> Hans Magnus Enzensberger, *The Sinking of the Titanic: A Poem* (London: Paladin, 1989), p. 61.

two units as a larger whole and marks the progress of time: but although it exists in time, it does not 'compose' duration.

Most music does not work as in Ex. 9 — one shape, repeated seven times in sequence — and this oddity validates Ruwet's preoccupation with the strange complicity between repetition and opposition in Debussy. Unlike language, which relies on phonemic opposition for the generation of structure, opposition in the *Prelude* dissolves in the microstructure into the undifferentiated repetition of a cliché. Furthermore, such repetition does not exemplify Jakobson's seminal 'poetic function' formulated to explain the patterning of the poetic syntagm by phonemic repetitions, and adopted by Nattiez as a model for music (§3.1). Fig. 6.3's network of mechanistic correspondences among the smallest units is too pervasive for Jakobson's model to be applicable, but the network does seem to be a characteristic structural virtue in Debussy. At this level of reduction, the repetition machine represents Bergson's oscillations of the pendulum — that unarticulated repetition fundamental to the unity of any temporal sequence. In itself, such repetition is beneath signification: for a function analogous to Mallarmé's *-or-* we will have to look more closely (Ch. 10).

It is possible, though, that the problem is being approached from the wrong direction. Try, then, Nattiez's procedure, *de bas en haut*,<sup>91</sup> analysing the *Prelude* beginning with the shortest repeated units, and call this level 4a (Fig. 6.4, Ex. 10).

Fig. 6.4

Level 4a:  $u + v + u + v1 + v2 + v3 + v4 + v5 + u (=x)$

(where bar lines and other articulative indications are elided).

As Nattiez has demonstrated, this procedure reveals a different structure on the same level. Analysing 'from bottom to top' shows that any relation of levels 4 and 4a is false since they cannot be correlated (see Ex. 10): one segmentation cuts across the other. But it does reveal another Debussy fingerprint, the ambiguity of the neighbour note (as the capacity

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<sup>91</sup> Literally, 'from bottom to top', which is to say, beginning from the smallest units. See Nattiez, *Fondements*, pp. 300-319.



for the two notes in the figure to shift from structural to inessential functions, and vice versa). In relation to level 4, level 4a reveals pervasive ambiguity on the pre-signifying level which has structural correspondences with the durational organisation of the *Prelude* (see Ex. 13), and extends far beyond Ruwet's explanation of ambiguity with reference to 'heterogeneous elements' (heterogeneity and ambiguity are separate functions).

**6.11** That Ruwet's distributional analysis can co-exist with the prose-text analysis which significantly undermines it reveals a fundamentally split focus: the prose analysis deconstructs the tabular analysis as a type of supplement in which the irrational counterpoints the rational, and the ludic subverts the systematic. By both subscribing to, and seeking to escape what Barbara Johnson has called 'the binary logic of identity ( $A = A$ ) and non-contradiction ( $A \neq \text{not-}A$ )',<sup>92</sup> Ruwet produces a proto-deconstructive text which stands as a testament to his analytical integrity; but what fails to emerge from his analysis is a convincing model of structural coherence that embraces rather than isolates the various infrastructures at work. The crux of this issue is the failure of Ruwet's *duplication* to differentiate functionally between exact and varied repetition: no functional distinction is made in the tabular analysis between repetitions of a unit  $a$ , and its variants ( $a1$ ,  $a2$ , etc). This apparently minor detail is the tip of a vast theoretical iceberg — the distinction between identity and difference, repetition and variation, and the third term, resemblance (or similarity).

Deleuze writes that 'repetition and resemblance are different in kind — extremely so':<sup>93</sup> in line with this precept, varied repetition must be considered as qualitatively different from exact repetition. I said above that exact repetition at the lowest level is pre-signifying and non-consequential: the corollary of this is that the signification and structural force of such units will come into play only when they are combined at a higher level. The same is true of higher-level exact repetitions which (as Ruwet mistakenly assumes for all contiguous *duplications*) must not be separated but taken together as a

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<sup>92</sup> Barbara Johnson, 'Writing', in Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin (eds), *Critical Terms for Literary Study* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), p. 45.

<sup>93</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (London: Athlone, 1994), p. 1.

higher-level unit. In the *Prélude*, there are two exact repetitions of larger (one-bar) units, bars 14-15 (Mélisande's theme) and bars 21-22 (tonic cadence and transition to scene 1). The functions of both instances is clear. Since, unlike the other character themes, Mélisande's theme remains unvaried throughout the opera to symbolise her unchanging nature, the theme gives an uncoded function to exact repetition. This type of repetition in the cadential units (bars 21-22) picks up Mélisande's quality of closure, the state of being closed off from outside influence and psychological transformation, and applies this formally as structural closure, thus creating an elementary correspondence between symbolic and formal functions. Furthermore, the location of these exact repetitions is essential to the proportional relation of the larger-scale phrase structure; and in the case of Mélisande's theme, the two-bar unit also generates motivic links with the other themes, links that are unavailable if the bars are separated.

The problem of exact repetition lies at the heart of the function of repetition in music. Empirically, repetition in general 'changes nothing in the object repeated but it does change something in the mind which contemplates it'.<sup>94</sup> In music, though, theorists accept John Rahn's view that 'all musical structure derives from repetition. [...] if structure, then repetition, and if no repetition, no structure'.<sup>95</sup> Although no reference is made to Bergson, Rahn elaborates this principle along Bergsonian lines: 'the experience of the second or subsequent instance of any quality or relation precipitates a structure: recognition precipitates cognition'.<sup>96</sup> The issue of whether repetition functions 'in the mind' or 'in the music', of whether it is a psychological or abstract function, is resolved hierarchically in a way that resembles Ruwet's account of repetitions as determined by their function within higher-level units. However, Rahn is more penetrating than Ruwet: two units, *a* and *then-a*, work in relation to a larger schema, *A* ('a larger thing whose telos is not given [...] but is in the process of being formed'),<sup>97</sup> and this constitutes a 'change of

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<sup>94</sup> Hume, quoted in Deleuze, *ibid.*, p. 70.

<sup>95</sup> John Rahn, 'Repetition', *Contemporary Music Review*, Vol. 7 (1993), p. 49.

<sup>96</sup> Rahn, *ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>97</sup> Rahn, *ibid.*, p. 50.

context' for the lower-level units, which 'adds "meaning"'.<sup>98</sup> The scheme is both abstract and temporal: time is present in the 'then' of *then-a* (*then-a* is *a* with 'added context') but the process of isolating the units is an abstraction (from the temporal change of context) and allows the units to be treated as 'things'.<sup>99</sup> Thus, the meaning of repetition is primarily the change of global context: as in Bergson, temporality is preserved, but abstraction is accepted as the injection of spatial concepts ('things', not events) into the temporal, which is necessary for analysis to occur. (Rahn parts company with Bergson in ascribing a positive value to abstraction.)

Rahn's 'change of context' highlights the fact that repetition is also transformation: the 'most recent pattern [*then-a*] fits together with other past patterns [*a*] to make a larger pattern [*A*] related itself to the most recent, now sub-pattern [*then-a*], by some (as it were) affine transformation'.<sup>100</sup> Consequently, it must be recognised that transformation rests on the possibility of repetition, since 'sense is dependent on repetition, without which nothing can be recognised'.<sup>101</sup> This latter statement concludes Rahn's extrapolation of repetition-in-the-world from repetition in music, a conceptual leap which is necessary to clinch the argument for repetition as a psychological meaning and not simple as an abstract relation. The issue at stake here is the preservation of difference in repetition, an issue that grounds critiques of the reductiveness of both formalist music analysis and the vulgar understanding of repetition in general.

**6.12** Situating repetition in the context of a study of musical narrative, Carolyn Abbate performs the structuralist move as critique. She is sceptical of the value of repetition as an analytical category but is unable to ignore its existence:

Repetition in *music* is as manifold as that in language, yet it tends to be accorded a higher value. In music, small- and large-scale recurrence is generally read as a fundamental means of coherence. Repetition in a temporal art reminds us of a past

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<sup>98</sup> 'The *change-of-context* from {*a*} to {*a*, then-*a*} is internal to {*a*, then-*a*}, and constitutes its *meaning* as a temporal being'. Rahn, *ibid.*, p. 53. Italics in the original.

<sup>99</sup> Rahn, *ibid.*, pp. 50-1, *passim*.

<sup>100</sup> Rahn, *ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>101</sup> Rahn, *ibid.*, p. 53.

moment in our experience of hearing: recurrences will bind together more digressive, improvisatory, unrepentive passages. [...] Small wonder, of course, that critics fasten upon forms of repetition in music. [...] Music analysts interpret music almost without exception as straying from recurring nodal points of familiarity. Thus tonal analyses trace the motions away from and back to (recurring) tonal centers, thematic analyses seek out the (recurring) forms of melodic matter, and analyses of atonal music enumerate the (re)appearances of 'important' atonal sets, row forms, or motivic gestures.<sup>102</sup>

The parentheses are devices of insistence, mimicking 'entrenchment', demonstrating ('performing') the protest against formalism.<sup>103</sup> What is reprehensible for her in formalist analysis is the static nature of repetition/recurrence which denies the movement inherent in what she calls 'replaying', the quality of retrospective and prospective motion that alone gives music a limited access to the past. Abbate rightly questions formalist reduction to the same since this 'move' ignores variation (difference), and de-temporalises music — in effect, it asserts that variation and transformation are dispensable accretions on a structure of exact repetitions beneath the musical surface. Where Rahn focusses on the psychological function of exact repetition *on* the surface, Abbate wants to check the tendency for structure to be reduced to sub-surface identity, and to re-awaken the analyst's perception of difference-in-repetition: this latter is not merely a sign of Rahn's change-of-context but a structural event that is itself subject to changes of context. That these concerns tend to progress from exact repetition to varied repetition is due to the fact that varied repetition is conceived two-dimensionally in music. While exact repetition is hierarchical by analogy with higher and lower levels, varied repetition is usually considered analytically by analogy with foreground-background or depth-to-surface models. Thus exact repetition is always to be found behind varied repetition, and it is all too easy to focus on this more manageable ground. There is a twofold challenge here: to avoid conceiving a sequence (*a*, *then-a*) simply as a series of presents (and thus non-temporally), and more difficult still, to avoid reducing (*a*, *a1*) to (*a*, *then-a*). If the

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<sup>102</sup> Abbate, *Unsung Voices*, p. 176. Italics in the original.

<sup>103</sup> Arnold Whittall identifies this move in 'Analytic voices: the musical narratives of Carolyn Abbate', *Music Analysis*, Vol. 11 (1992), p. 97.

resemblance of *a* and *aI* is subsumed under Ruwet's notion of 'equivalence', the music-theoretical concept of repetition is too wide simply because it resolves difference-in-content or difference-in-context into identity-in-function. Equivalence is therefore a reductive concept.

These issues rest on the continuum identity-resemblance-difference: none of these qualities can be neutralised if the functional relation of (*a*, *aI*) is to be grasped. When de Man says that 'repetition is a temporal process that assumes difference as well as resemblance',<sup>104</sup> he resists any resolution of resemblance into equivalence, assumes that varied repetition (resemblance, not identity) is the primary meaning of 'repetition', and that what is worth investigating is repetition's differential aspect. The latter topic has a distinguished 19th-century pedigree, beginning with Kierkegaard's *Repetition* (1843), a remarkable textual palimpsest demonstrating both the necessity and 'impossibility' of repetition. Repetition is distinguished from 'retaking' — the quest for identical experience achieved by a re-enactment (a repetition) of recollected experience — and from 'redoubling', a property of 'ideality' in which 'the idea is and remains the same and as such cannot be repeated'.<sup>105</sup> Even when 'ideality and reality touch each other' repetition resolves itself into redoubling: 'the external [reality] is, but in the same moment I bring it into conjunction with something that also is, something that is also the same, and will explain that the other is the same'.<sup>106</sup> Therefore, Ruwet's structuring of repetition in Debussy into a 'dialectic of the repeated and non-repeated' can be read through Kierkegaard as both 'retaking' (as a record of Debussy's quest for re-enactment) and as 'redoubling', since the reality of *a* and *aI* is always assumed to be a resolution to the essence (in this case, to the 'firstness') of *a*.

Kierkegaard also makes a fundamental distinction between repetition and recollection: 'Repetition is a crucial expression for what "recollection" was to the Greeks.

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<sup>104</sup> Paul de Man, *Blindness and Insight*, p. 108.

<sup>105</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *Repetition*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), p. 275.

<sup>106</sup> Kierkegaard, *Repetition*, p. 275. The potential of idea and reality, concept and fact, to resolve differences into mere resemblance leads Kierkegaard to locate true repetition in 'the realm of the spirit': repetition 'signifies atonement, which is the most profound expression of repetition', and is to be found in 'transcendence' — identity as ineffable truth (pp. 311-13, *passim*).

Just as they thought all knowing is recollecting, modern philosophy will teach us that all life is repetition'.<sup>107</sup> Knowledge is passive, an act of memory, while repetition is active: 'repetition and recollection are the same movement, except in opposite directions, for what has been recollected has been, is repeated backwards, whereas genuine repetition is recollected forward'.<sup>108</sup> Through the oxymoron in the oppositional definition (repeated backwards/ recollected forwards) Kierkegaard recaptures the positive, dynamic quality for repetition which Abbate intends by her category of 'replaying': when this is frozen in analysis, music could be said to be reduced to the repeating-backwards status of mere 'knowledge'. Kierkegaard states the basic fact recognised by Rahn but absent in Ruwet, that 'the dialectic of repetition is easy, for that which is repeated has been — but the very fact that it has been makes the repetition into something new'.<sup>109</sup> Repetition proper is 'what has mistakenly been called *mediation*' introduced, erroneously, into logic to install the concept of movement (as in  $a=a$ ):<sup>110</sup> in Kierkegaard, the 'movement' inherent in repetition is the movement of difference (not simply identity) present even in the symbolic form of equivalence, whereas Bergson's 'movement' is confined to *durée* and Rahn's is produced by 'change-of-context'. Thus, Kierkegaard's enquiry into the reality of repetition overlaps with Bergson's location of non-spatial repetition in memory: both emphasise difference in the repeated and raise absolute identity to an 'impossible', in Kierkegaard as spiritual atonement and in Bergson as something foreign to the essential nature of *durée*. This background is the scenario for the great Proustian quest for the impossible, the real access to the past which entails the search for identical repetition in memory as an exact replication of past experience, troped by Proust as *temps perdu*.<sup>111</sup> By comparison, the easy retreat in music theory to abstraction as a satisfactory account of repetition seems naive.

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<sup>107</sup> Kierkegaard, *ibid.*, p. 131.

<sup>108</sup> Kierkegaard, *ibid.*, p. 131.

<sup>109</sup> Kierkegaard, *ibid.*, p. 149.

<sup>110</sup> 'There is no explanation in our age as to how mediation takes place, whether it results from a motion of the two factors [in logic] and in what sense it is already contained in them, or whether it is something new that is added, and, if so how. In this connection the Greek concept of *kinesis* [motion, change] corresponds to the modern category of "transition". Kierkegaard, *Repetition*, p. 148-9.

<sup>111</sup> See Gilles Deleuze, *Proust and Signs*, trans. Richard Howard (London: Allen Lane, 1973).

Grounding the ontological repetition of Kierkegaard and the psychic repetition explored (with different results) in Bergson and Proust, is Derrida's 'iterability', 'the possibility and necessity [...] that any singular and unique moment must be repeatable in order to exist'.<sup>112</sup> In Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams*, for example, 'the dream only comes-to-be *after the fact*, as it were, in the process of repetition, recounting and retelling'.<sup>113</sup> Derrida locates necessity, as presence, in the dimension of possibility since iterability 'can occur as a possibility to any unit and is, consequently, a necessary possibility that must be inscribed within the essence of that unit itself'.<sup>114</sup> Derrida's conception adds an important dimension to Rahn's reminder that repetition is essential for recognition and sense. Whereas Rahn locates the 'meaning' of repetition primarily in the repeated (*then-a*), Derrida insists that the first unit (*a*) grounds iterability which is inscribed in the essence of the unit. This latter corresponds to my perception (outlined above) that repetition in Debussy proceeds from drives within the material of a unit *a*: iterability captures a fundamental function for repetition in Debussy, that musical structure is based in a representation of the ground of being — repeatability in order to exist.

However, repetition also entails absence. Lyotard's opening gambit in a discussion of musical repetition runs as follows: 'Here is the story I would have liked to tell you: that repetition escapes from repetition in order to repeat. That in trying to have itself forgotten, it fixes its forgetting, and thus repeats its absence'.<sup>115</sup> Expressed less elliptically, this means that Lyotard would like to say that a repetition escapes from ontological repetition (iterability) in order simply to repeat. But repetition does not work only as the installation of a new presence (the repeated). It cannot be forgotten that repetition is a restatement of something that occurred earlier: it defines the absence of its origin, the original statement, and in the process compromises its present existence. Thus, Gasché says of iterability that repetition 'hinges on the *structural* possibility of an absence of the repeated. If the unit to be repeated were totally present and present to itself, if it

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<sup>112</sup> Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror*, p. 212.

<sup>113</sup> Samuel Weber, 'It', *Glyph*, Vol. 4 (1978), pp. 24-5. Italics in the original.

<sup>114</sup> Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror*, p. 213.

<sup>115</sup> Jean-François Lyotard, 'God and the puppet', in *The Inhuman*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), p. 153.

were not broached by a certain lack of plenitude, no repetition could ever occur'.<sup>116</sup> Measured against the theory of iterability, exact repetition as conceived by Ruwet is revealed once more as impossible in time because a *then-a* will only mark the absence of an *a*. Varied repetition, it must again be concluded, is the only possible repetition. As Lacan writes, 'repetition demands the new'.<sup>117</sup> Lacan conceives this drive towards difference as a psychological function in which repetition is 'turned towards the ludic': whatever, in repetition, is varied, modulated, is merely alienation of its meaning. [...] But this sliding away (*glissement*) conceals what is the true secret of the ludic, namely the most radical diversity constituted by repetition itself'.<sup>118</sup> Thus, in varied repetition the primacy of Rahn's change-of-context gives way to the dimension of play (which in Lacan goes 'some way to satisfying the pleasure principle').<sup>119</sup> Although Lacan equates alienation of the meaning of repetition with variation, this should not be read simply as reductive: alienation is not negation, but is the process of estrangement. Lacan is hinting here at the complicity of repetition and the uncanny which can be allied with Kierkegaard's 'movement' — repetition as something 'recollected forwards'.

The general difficulty with repetition, therefore, is that it is never completely itself, but that at the same time it must be distinguished from difference. A repetition is never absolutely identical with its origin, but if something different occurs, the difference can never be absolutely different if the repetition is to compensate for the lack of the original statement. 'Iteration [empirical repetition] alters, something new takes place',<sup>120</sup> and this is why Lyotard recognises that it is not sufficient to say that repetition simply 'repeats its absence'. Only if a unit is 'sufficiently similar and sufficiently different to occupy the place of another' can it fill the lack created by the absence of the other, and iterability is therefore both 'the possibility of iteration and the possibility of alteration'.<sup>121</sup> Lyotard's general theory of musical repetition performs the interplay of identity and

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<sup>116</sup> Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror*, p. 213.

<sup>117</sup> Jacques Lacan, 'Tuché and automaton', in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin, 1979), p. 61.

<sup>118</sup> Lacan, 'Tuché', p. 61.

<sup>119</sup> Lacan, *ibid.*, p. 62.

<sup>120</sup> Derrida, quoted in Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror*, p. 213.

<sup>121</sup> Gasché, *ibid.*, p. 213.



difference and seems to reinscribe Derrida's dimensions of iteration and alteration as a distinction between 'determined' repetition (characterised by 'exclusive identity') and 'undetermined' repetition. Determined repetition 'fixes sonorous matter into distinctive properties for *acoustic* knowledge [...] guided by an Idea (in the Platonic sense) of a self (the sound) according to its exclusive identity',<sup>122</sup> thus restating Kierkegaard's criteria for redoubling (the interplay of reality and ideality). The inescapability of repetition is validated by its relation to 'divine automatism in Aristotle's sense, which is the self-sufficiency of the same'<sup>123</sup> which acknowledges the mechanical as, possibly, a simulacrum of the 'laws' of the natural world.<sup>124</sup> Determined repetition restates Rousseau's *son* (sonority) which, in de Man's gloss, 'is never identical with itself or with prospective repetitions of itself, even if these future sounds possess the same properties of pitch or timbre as the present one'.<sup>125</sup> The musical sonority, thus conceived, is 'empty' and incapable of bearing meaning :

Music can never rest for a moment in the stability of its own existence: it steadily has to repeat itself in a movement that is bound to remain endless. This movement persists regardless of any illusion of presence. [...] it is determined by the nature of the sign as *signifiant* [signifier]. [...] On the one hand, music is condemned to exist always as a moment; on the other hand, this very frustration prevents us from remaining within the moment. Musical signs are unable to coincide: their dynamics are always oriented toward the future of their repetition, never toward the consonance of their simultaneity.<sup>126</sup>

Lyotard's undetermined repetition, on the other hand, deserts the metaphysical value of iteration for the dimension of freedom, that is, of iterability, and is defined as follows:

"free" repetition [...] of the forms of the composition of the sounds with each other, [...] which accepts variation and transposition [and] is "only" made up of analogy. [...] The identity of what is repeated [...] is not determined; [...] it is only indicated as the object of an allusion made to it by the different occurrences of a chord or phrase. [...]

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<sup>122</sup> Lyotard, 'God and the puppet', p. 154.

<sup>123</sup> Lyotard, *ibid.*, p. 163.

<sup>124</sup> However, Lacan notes that 'repetition' in Freud is distinct from mere 'reproduction' ('Tuché', p. 54) and from 'repetition residing in the natural, return of need' ('Tuché', p. 61).

<sup>125</sup> de Man, *Blindness and Insight*, p. 128.

<sup>126</sup> de Man, *ibid.*, p. 129.

Each of these occurrences adds to the others a sort of supplement due to its very difference'.<sup>127</sup>

This supplement 'always presupposes the absence or retreat of the thing itself, i.e. of the chord or phrase to which these occurrences allude',<sup>128</sup> and thus creates the illusion of presence as endless movement with a difference, in short, all that grounds the figural repetitions of a discourse.

In summary, a repetition (whether *then-a* or *a I*) entails the absence of its origin (*a*) and a lack of autonomy (as fullness or plenitude) in the original unit. But as a description of repetition in music, this is clearly not universally applicable. The repetitions, sequences and echoes of a Vivaldi ritornello, for example, are repetition without consequences, by analogy with Bergson's spatial repetition or Lyotard's determined repetition, in which formal function is best troped as a patterning of structure.<sup>129</sup> Debussy's repetition, on the other hand seems (especially in *Pelléas*) to embody the more profound ontological repetition of Bergson's 'memory', Lyotard's 'undetermined repetition', and Derrida's 'iterability'. Whereas in baroque repetition the units are almost always autonomous, closed structures, in Debussy a unit *a* is normally both closed and open: it incorporates conventional signs of closure (cadence and complete neighbour-note structures, for example), but also has the potential for non-repetitive development. The closure function is therefore not determined entirely by the content of the unit but by the fact that it is repeated: its potential for closure is activated by repetition itself, and on this ground, iterability as a discursive function emerges as particularly applicable to this style. Such complexity of relation suggests that repetitions in Debussy are fully discursive and not merely the terms of a formal function: discursive units (of reading, for example) are presented as complete in themselves until they are repeated (with a difference), thus opening what was formerly closed and raising all the potentialities inscribed in iterability in general.

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<sup>127</sup> Lyotard, 'God and the puppet', pp. 154-5.

<sup>128</sup> Lyotard, *ibid.*, p. 155.

<sup>129</sup> See Peter Kivy, 'The fine art of repetition', in *The Fine Art of Repetition: Essays in the Philosophy of Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 327-59. Such patterning in Kivy is termed the 'wallpaper' model.

**6.13** Nevertheless, iterability may be too inclusive a category to be effective critically, since it is only a structural *possibility* for any unit, and therefore does not have to take place: iterability is therefore not repetition 'in fact' and is not inherently structuring. Derrida's notions of 'supplement' (taking my cue from Lyotard's use of this term, quoted in §6.12 above) and 're-mark' perhaps provide a solution to this difficulty, insofar as they are identified within texts as the infrastructures carrying the burden of elucidating the non-structural structuring of discursive units. My focus here is on the logic of varied repetition in Debussy which, like the 'logic' of the supplement in Derrida, proceeds from *différance*. As the term suggests, the supplement involves the additional and superfluous: it is added to an already complete structure as 'a plenitude enriching another plenitude'.<sup>130</sup> But the supplement also functions to replace: 'it fills as if one fills a void'.<sup>131</sup> 'As a substitute', Derrida writes, the supplement's place is 'assigned by the mark of an emptiness. Somewhere, something can be filled up of *itself*, can accomplish itself, only by allowing itself to be filled by sign and proxy'.<sup>132</sup> These definitions have a certain aesthetic appropriateness to Debussy's repetition. Insofar as they are discrete, two units in a relation of varied repetition (*a*, *aI*) can be taken as plenitudes: *aI* is supplemental since it will function primarily as a structural delay, a function neither necessitated by the first nor required to complete the logic of harmonic progression and tonal unfolding (§8.15, Ex. 16); an *aI* is almost without exception dispensable harmonically. A unit *aI* also substitutes for *a* as its displacement, sign and proxy, in the sense that it stands for *a* and effaces it, but is essential to fill the void left by its absence (this is evident primarily in the phrase structure). The particularity of varied repetition in Debussy is that an *aI* can rarely be demonstrated to be necessary in abstract models of tonal or thematic structure, but the music is impoverished without it. Thus, a unit *a* seems to depend on its varied repetition (*aI*) for a necessary temporal unfolding, as if the material content of the unit required

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<sup>130</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), p. 145.

<sup>131</sup> Derrida, *ibid.*, p. 145.

<sup>132</sup> Derrida, *ibid.*, p. 145. Italics in the original.

repetition in order to fulfil itself; conversely, because an *aI* also depends on *a* for its status as repetition, it cannot be complete in itself.

Supplement relations constitute a complex simultaneity of self-reference listed by Barbara Johnson as follows:

A is added to B  
 A substitutes for B  
 A is a superfluous addition to B  
 A makes up for the absence of B  
 A usurps the place of B  
 A makes up for B's deficiency  
 A corrupts the purity of B  
 A is necessary so that B can be restored  
 A is an accident alienating B from itself  
 A is that without which B would be lost  
 A is that through which B is lost  
 A is a danger to B  
 A is a remedy to B  
 The fallacious charm of A seduces one away from B  
 A can never satisfy the desire for B  
 A protects against a direct encounter with B.<sup>133</sup>

(Mapping this scheme onto Debussy's repetition structures requires Johnson's 'A' and 'B' to be read as *aI* and *a* respectively. Her terms need not be read as oppositions: they refer to two distinct entities that may be more or less similar, along the continuum identity-to-difference.) Johnson's functions embrace the differential aspect of repetition, subordinating Ruwet's 'equivalence' to the additions in *aI* and its functional transformation which constitutes its supplementarity. The functional difference or estrangement installed in the repetition allows it to 'escape from repetition in order to repeat' (Lyotard), so that repetition is liberated by difference. Conceived as supplement, varied repetition in Debussy creates a micro-structural image of Bergson's concept of memory, the recognition that the past is the past, unattainable and un-re-enactable, but necessarily renovated in the new present. Each of Johnson's functions captures something

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<sup>133</sup> Johnson, 'Writing', p. 45.

of the simultaneous effect of necessity and (mere) possibility in Debussy's schemes, but these effects are not divorced from the material properties of the units themselves. Thus, according to this model, the signifying chain is advanced through varied repetition as a procession of additions and displacements which tends to emphasise a subtle relation or conflict of (analytically elusive) properties within the units.

One of the functions of Derrida's re-mark is to account for repetition of the property or properties of a unit, here conceived as a mark or sign, indication, trait or token.<sup>134</sup> The re-mark exemplified in Derrida's analysis of Mallarmé's *Or* (see above) takes the form of repetitions of the phoneme (-or-) and are said to be both an inessential addition to, and a structural possibility realised in Mallarmé's text: -or- re-marks the 'moment in which form and content, inside and outside, break down';<sup>135</sup> that is, when the structure of a word (e.g., *fantasmagorique*) is made strange by the repetition of the phoneme within it, a feature that would be impossible, un-re-marked, without the dissemination of -or- in a repetitive series. Thus, the re-mark overlaps with the supplement as inessential addition, and is also a form of iterability, as the duplication of the concept *or* (gold) by each instance of its mark (here, signifier), and by its occurrences within other signs in the text. These other marks contain -or-, the re-mark, and thus they are marked in advance by -or-. In the *ℳelude* to *Pelléas*, the re-mark can be seen to exist contiguously, and thus trivially, where it defines a minimal structure of repetition at the lowest level (Fig. 6.4). But it emerges as a structural possibility, re-marking the same within the repeated, when isolated as the complete neighbour-note structure common to all the character themes and which unites all units of the *ℳelude* up to bar 16 (it then descends to the lower parts as a contrapuntal voice). This is re-markable, rather than simply pervasive, because the complete neighbour-note structure is internally destabilised by its various contexts: in bars 1-2 it is metrically syncopated, and only later does it shift rhythmically to begin on the strong beat of the bar (see Ex. 12); and it is harmonically unstable because the neighbour note itself is variously prolongational or prolonged.

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<sup>134</sup> Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror*, p. 218.

<sup>135</sup> Derek Attridge, 'Derrida and the questioning of literature', in Jacques Derrida, *Acts of Literature*, ed. Derek Attridge (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 16.

Because the re-mark is embedded in the surface of the units, this dissemination in the *Prelude* gives a structural force to iterability. No reductive process is necessary to isolate it: the mark is presented to consciousness through repetition in the same way as -or- re-marks Mallarmé's text, insinuating itself in the difference of the opposed (musical or literary) units as a quasi-ontological fact. Thus, the various occurrences of the neighbour-note mark the re-mark: the specific instance (in the units) is to be distinguished from the ideal form (the neighbour note as a structure) repeated in each instance; and because the insistence of the mark fluctuates (it is more or less primary in the opposed units) it can be understood to 'knot together in one cluster of predicates the movements of doubling, repetition and retraction (or 'effacement')'.<sup>136</sup> And as in Derrida's re-mark, the neighbour note as re-mark is an undecidable which 'inhabits [...] opposition, resisting and disorganising it *without ever* constituting a third term'.<sup>137</sup> As we shall see, this undecidability is the origin of paradigmatic ambiguity in the *Prelude*, in which difference is always threatened by identity and 'equivalence' can always be resolved as differential, without a 'third term' becoming available — except, of course, for the bolt-hole of 'similarity' in which everything is resemblance.

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<sup>136</sup> Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror*, p. 224.

<sup>137</sup> Derrida, *Positions*, p. 42. Italics in the original.

## 7: Three Classics Revisited

### 7.1

#### *Correspondances*

La nature est un temple où de vivants piliers  
 Laissent parfois sortir de confuses paroles;  
 L'homme y passe à travers des forêts de symboles  
 Qui l'observent avec des regards familiers.

Comme de longs échos qui de loin se confondent  
 Dans une ténébreuse et profonde unité,  
 Vaste comme la nuit et comme la clarté,  
 Les parfums, les couleurs et les sons se répondent.

Il est des parfums frais comme des chairs d'enfants,  
 Doux comme les hautbois, verts comme des prairies,  
 — Et d'autres, corrompus, riches et triomphants,

Ayant l'expansion des choses infinies,  
 Comme l'ambre, le musc, le benjoin et l'encens,  
 Qui chantent les transports de l'esprit et des sens.<sup>1</sup>

In Baudelaire's seminal sonnet, 'Correspondances' (first published in 1857), Nature yields 'perplexing messages', 'sounds, scents and colours correspond/ ... like long-held echoes, blending somewhere else/ into one deep and shadowy unison', the perceptions of the senses are united, and perfumes 'sing the senses' raptures and the mind's'.<sup>2</sup> Here the symbolic meaning is restricted to the persistence and diffusion of odours and perfumes (which mimics the permanence of the visual and the evanescence of music: this overlap of sense properties is the agent of correspondence); but there is a pleonastic signification, the intoxicating synesthesia in which perfumes can feel 'succulent as young flesh', sound as 'sweet as flutes' and appear as 'green as any grass', or, in their own domain, share the

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Baudelaire, 'Correspondances', *Les Fleurs du mal*, bi-lingual edition, trans. Richard Howard (London: Picador, 1982), p. 193.

<sup>2</sup> Baudelaire, *ibid.*, trans. Richard Howard, p. 15. Translation modified.

infinitude of 'incense, amber, benjamin and musk'. This synesthesia, 'the creative confusion of the senses',<sup>3</sup> is reciprocal: signifiers shuttle between one sense or another, but beyond the correspondences nothing more is specified. The poem could be said to be about signification: the 'perplexing messages' cannot and need not be decoded since *correspondance* itself is the mystery that reaches toward infinity (we are invited to experience 'incense', for example, as infinite by virtue of its visual, aural and tactile associations).

There is no reason to suppose that Baudelaire's *correspondances* are less calculated than the refrain function of Poe's 'The Raven' (§5.5). Speaking of music in the context of Liszt's prose poem-analysis of the overture to Wagner's *Tannhäuser*, Baudelaire quoted the octave of 'Correspondances' in support of Liszt's (now very conventional) synesthesia of sound and colour (Liszt: 'the trombones [...] take up the melody for the fourth time, with a blinding climax of colour', etc.).<sup>4</sup> We should not be sceptical, Baudelaire wrote, if music 'suggests different ideas in similar minds':

the only really surprising thing would be that sound could not suggest colour, that colours could not give the idea of melody, and that both sound and colour together were unsuitable as media for ideas.<sup>5</sup>

This radical, eccentric view, that music and the visual (colour) can carry ideational content states a problem that also preoccupied Mallarmé (§7.4). For Baudelaire, this reciprocity is also mimetic: introducing the sonnet, he writes that 'all things always have been expressed by reciprocal analogies, ever since the day when God created the world as a complex totality'.<sup>6</sup> *Correspondance* in the sonnet that announces it, represents, if not the world itself, a truth about the world — the fact that, as Bergson later reiterated in 1896, 'as everything resembles everything else, it follows that anything can be associated with anything'.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes*, p. 178.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in Baudelaire, 'Richard Wagner and *Tannhäuser* in Paris', in *Selected Writings*, p. 330. Italics in the original.

<sup>5</sup> Baudelaire, *ibid.*, p. 330.

<sup>6</sup> Baudelaire, *ibid.*, pp. 330-1.

<sup>7</sup> Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, p. 168.



What does Baudelaire mean by sound and colour as 'media for ideas'? Most obviously, this should apply to rhyme, but this does not always relate corresponding objects or properties. There is, for example, a clear relationship of sound and sense in the rhyme *se confondent* (line 5) and *se répondent* (line 8), but no such self-evident correspondence exists between *piliers* (line 1) and *familiers* (line 4). As Hertz argues, rhyme, and its role in the creation of 'periodic' syntactic structures, preserves an independent structural role:<sup>8</sup> the relationship of ideas in the first quatrain of the sonnet (lines 1-4) depends on the similarity of syntax, subject/predicate (verb+object)/subordinate clause

Fig. 7.1

subject	predicate	subordinate clause
La nature	est un temple où de vivants piliers, /	Laissent parfois sortir de confuses paroles.
L'homme	y passe à travers des forêts de symboles,	/ Qui l'observent avec des regards familiers.

This traditional, 'external' structure creates the correspondences Nature and Man, 'living pillars' and 'forest of symbols', while the subordinate clauses (consequents to the main clauses' antecedents) in both lines elaborate the object. Rhyme intercedes here to establish further correspondences: *paroles* and *symboles* are equivalent, but in the first line the first term issues from *piliers*; the subsequent rhyme thus reinforces the relation of 'pillars' and 'symbols' effected by the similarity of structural location. *Regards familiers*, rhyming with *piliers*, turns the quatrain back on itself, creating a closure of sense and suggesting reciprocity: the *correspondances* of Nature are established as Man's natural element. But the symbols *observe* Man, *correspondances* are latent in Nature, and are not a human product: symbols, passive in their 'observation', are not active until they are interpreted, or at least stated (as they are in Baudelaire's second quatrain).

While periodicity can create correspondences through structure, it does not depend on rhyme or any other sonic relationship. It is not, therefore, a significant

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<sup>8</sup> Daniel Michael Hertz, *The Tuning of the Word: The Musico-literary Poetics of the Symbolist Movement* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1987), pp. 1-31.

element in the Symbolist obsession with the 'musicality of verse'. In the remainder of the poem Baudelaire continues to use a more general category, syntactic similarity, to create or support *correspondances*, but this always exists in conjunction with assonance, rhyme or (less frequently) alliteration. After the first quatrain, in fact, periodicity disappears, to be replaced by more subtle, 'libidinal' correspondences that assert not only similarity but also difference.

The second quatrain elaborates the nasal vowel *-on-*, as assonance, and uses alliteration and rhyme to establish secondary correspondences (morphemes underlined and vertically aligned are similar):

Fig. 7.2

line 5:	comme de l —	<u>ongs</u> échos
	qui de loin	
	se	<u>con-</u>
		<u>fondent</u>

These sonic correspondences split *longs* into two morphemes (*l-* and *-ongs*) as a kind of analysis of its ideational content. The first reveals that *longs* contains the idea of distance in relation to *loin* (far); the second, corresponding to *se confondent* returns to the fundamental nature of *correspondance*, that it is a mixture, a confusion of sensations, by analogy with the aural 'confusion' produced by long echos. Lines 6 and 7 contain the projection of two structural features. First, *profonde* (line 6) corresponds with *se confondent*, etc., to add to the idea of *correspondance* the nuance that it arises from a profound unity, and does not remain merely a surface relationship of attributes. Secondly, the 'analysis' of *longs* (line 5) is replicated by an analysis of *unité* (line 6):

Fig. 7.3

		[se <u>con-</u> <u>fondent</u> ]	
line 6:	Dans une ténébreuse et	prof <u>onde</u>	<u>uni</u> — <u>té</u>
line 7:	Vaste comme la		<u>nuit</u>
	et    comme la		
	clar-		- <u>té</u>

Night and day (*la clarté*) form a conceptual opposition expressed in sound by the contrast of closed and open vowels. Their common property (*vaste*) is an illustration of the 'profound unity' established by the presence of their morphemes in *unité* itself, a correspondence underpinned by syntactic similarity (*Vaste: comme la nuit, [et] comme la clarté*). In this restricted sense, they are 'united' by reciprocity. This stands as a paradigm of the nature of *correspondance* itself, as Bachelard's gloss makes clear:

It is striking that one of the poets who grasped the decisive instants of being most strongly was the poet of *correspondances*. The Baudelairean *correspondance* is not, as has often been said, a simple transposition that would yield a code of sensual analogies. It is a totality of sensible being in a single instant. But the simultaneities of feeling that reunite perfumes, colours and sounds cause only more distant and profound simultaneities to be initiated. In the two unities, night and day, the dual eternity of good and evil is found. What is 'vast' in night and day must not, however, suggest a spatial view. Night and light are not evoked for their extent, for their infinity, but for their unity. Night is not a space. It is a threat of eternity. Night and light are immobile instants, dark or light, happy or sad, dark and light, happy and sad. The poetic instant was never more complete than in this verse in which we can connect the immensity of day and night at the same time.<sup>9</sup>

Line 8 closes the quatrain by returning to the doubling of *-on-* established in line 5, to which is added a sonic repetition (*sons / se*) to bind together the concepts of sound and correspondence:

<sup>9</sup> Gaston Bachelard, 'Instant poétique et instant métaphysique', in *L'intuition de l'instant* (Paris: Gonthier, 1932), p. 110.

Fig. 7.4

Les parfums,	les couleurs,	et les sons
		se ré — pondent.

Within all these repetitions there is a constant difference, the variation of long and short vowels (for example, *sons* and *répondent*). *Correspondances*, as represented in sound, are unstable (not exact repetitions), varied by length and the influence of their associated consonants.

In the sestet, Baudelaire observes the requirement that it should provide a contrast to the octave of the sonnet. But there is little contrast in idea; the rules of the form are observed only in sound, the privileged domain. Lines 9-11 avoid the now predominant *-on-*, except for *corrompus* ('corrupted', line 11) which adds a further nuance to *correspondance*: all the definitive (as opposed to the illustrative) terms for this concept are related by *-on-*. These lines introduce *-an-*, which predominates in lines 12-14, and develop the relatively open sounds *-air* and *-i-*:

Fig. 7.5

[9]	Il est des	<u>frais</u> parfums			
	comme des	<u>chairs</u>		<u>en-fants</u> /	[10] Doux
	comme des				<u>haut</u> bois,
		<u>verts</u>			
	comme des	<u>prai</u> —	<u>-ries</u> /	[11]	Et d' <u>autres</u>
					<u>corrompu</u> ,
			<u>riches</u>		
	et	<u>ti</u> —			<u>-om</u> —
			<u>-phants</u> ,		

The perfumes are defined in a series of oppositions (children's flesh, oboes, prairies), each bound to the other by the syntactic similarity of simile (*comme des*, is like). Each has its own internal structure, which develops synesthetically from their respective adjectives

(*frais, doux, verts*): *frais...chairs d'enfants* is a repetition both within the second noun and between the adjective and first noun; *doux...hautbois* is a 'musical' progression of closed to open vowels, -ou-, -au-, -oi-; *verts...prairies* is a sonic repetition of noun and adjective (connected to *chairs*, the first item in the sequence). *Verts* ('green', line 10) and *infinies* ('infinite', line 12) are the most obvious attributes of *prairies*, and their distinctive sounds (-er- and -i-) are combined in the noun: again, the concept is analysed by the duplication of its sonic properties.

Thus, although the conceptual difference of each syntactic unit is represented by sonic difference, these differences are made to correspond by syntactic similarity and the chain of non-systematic sonic relations. Furthermore, the sonic relations are, typically, not created with the noun *parfums*, but with its quality, *frais*. *Correspondance* works through the connection of attributes: once this is established, the objects or concepts are relationally implicated. At the end of line 11, *riches et triomphants* collects the predominant sounds of the final lines of the poem (12-14), emphasising them by internal repetition (-i-) and rhyme (with *enfants*, line 9, and *sens*, line 14). This particular sequence is an important premonition-correspondence with the last line (14):

Fig. 7.6

[11]	<u>r</u> iches et	
	tri-	-om-ph <u>an</u> ts,
[14]	l'espr <u>i</u> t et de le	<u>s</u> ens.

As a unit, lines 12-14 develop -an- with a sequence of internal rhymes:

Fig. 7.7

[12]		Ayant			
	l'ex-	-pansion	des choses		inf-
					-nies,
[13]	Comme	l'ambre		le musc, le benjoin, et	
		l'en-			
		-cens,			
[14]	Qui	chantent			
		les trans—ports		de	l'esprit
	et de	sens.			

These final lines create closure through repetition, a type of structural excess in poetry, characteristic of Symbolism and its legacy, a specifically 'musical' strategy (for final cadences). Like music, too, the poem contains a projection of its essential ideas in sound, a projection that both causes and enacts *correspondance* as a subject. Thus, Baudelaire's 'sound' has become structure (primarily through syntactic similarity and assonance), the whole controlled by 'periodic' phrases within the strict sonnet form which both grounds and contains the correspondences. This is what is meant by 'the musicality of verse': not simply a play of sound, but the complicity of sound and sense, 'colour' and ideas.

Furthermore, there seems to be a parallel with music's fondness for models, whether syntactic (as in tonal routines), thematic, or as event-sequences. Baudelaire's title, 'Correspondances', prominently features the sounds *-on-* and *-an-*, in the order that they are developed in the poem (lines 5-8, 12-14, the conclusions of the octave and sestet respectively). And, appropriately in the context, the vowels of the simile construction ('is like' means 'to correspond') correspond with the first two vowels of 'Correspondances':

Fig. 7.8

cor-	-es-	-pond-ances
comme de	-on-	-an-

If this interpretation is valid,<sup>10</sup> then Baudelaire has transferred a fundamental musical process to poetry: *correspondance* as a sonic model already contains the *confuses paroles* that issue from it.<sup>11</sup> The poem is, perhaps, also an analysis.

However, the relation of oppositions is not achieved through sound alone. In lines 9-11 the simile construction both asserts and conceals a more fundamental conceptual sequence of shared attributes. The adjective normally follows the noun in French, but in the simile construction it *precedes* the noun; each adjective in these lines is therefore ambiguously related to its preceding noun:

Fig. 7.9

parfums: FRAIS: chairs d'enfants

chairs d'enfants: DOUX: hautbois

hautbois: VERTS: prairies

This adjectival multi-reference carries a correspondence from one object to the other: both perfumes and children's flesh can be fresh (*frais*); flesh and oboes can be sweet (*doux*); and, since the oboe is conventionally the pastoral instrument, both oboes and prairies can be 'green' (*verts*). The sequence of similes, then, by an inversion of the usual word order, contains the potential for the exchange of metaphorical attributes, just as sonic correspondences are exchanged. (It is a short step from this to the appositive metaphor common in French surrealist poetry: 'des parfums verts', for instance, where the intervening shared properties are suppressed, so that the relations are *in absentia*, not *in praesentia* as in Baudelaire.)

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<sup>10</sup> Clive Scott notes that in the Symbolist poem 'the polysyllabic word, by the play of its modulating vowels, can suggest several meanings at once. For Mallarmé, this is the source of its richness', whereas in the early Modernism of Laforgue 'it is a sign of its duplicity and guile. It has too much to say to be able to tell the truth', and is therefore ironised or avoided. Clive Scott, 'Symbolism, Decadence and Impressionism', in Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane (eds), *Modernism: A Guide to European Literature 1890-1930* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991), p. 213.

<sup>11</sup> In the fragmentary text 'On the significance of sequences of vowels' (1911), Freud considers the question of this type of sonic model in language: 'Objections have no doubt been raised to the assertion [...] that in dreams and associations names which have been concealed seem to be replaced by others that resemble them only in containing the same sequence of vowels. A striking analogy is, however, provided from the history of religion. [...] to this very day, the vocalisation of the four consonants in God's name (YHWH) remains unknown. It was, however, pronounced 'Jehovah', being supplied with the vowels of the word 'Adonai' ('Lord'). Freud, *Standard Edition*, Vol. 12, p. 341.

7.2 Poetic construction in metaphorical sequences by means of such suppression (technically a suppression of synecdoches, §§8.11, 8.12) is typical of Rimbaud's canonic Symbolist text, 'Voyelles' (c.1870). The analysis of the vowel E (lines 5-6) uses Baudelaire's technique of sonic correspondence to connect items whose relation lies deep beneath the surface. We are invited to visualise the series (because these sounds are ubiquitous, Rimbaud does not do anything so obvious as to relate the items to, or derive them from, the sound of the subject vowel).

[...] E, candeurs des vapeurs et des tentes,  
Lances des glaciers fiers, rois blancs, frissons d'ombelles;

[...] E. whiteness of vapours and tents,/ lances of proud glaciers, white kings, shivers of cow-parsley;<sup>12</sup>

Like Baudelaire, Rimbaud determines colour as the primary quality, as announced in the first line ('A noir, E blanc, I rouge, U vert, O bleu: voyelles') which is perhaps the most obvious instance of the 'symbolist's trick of elevating color above [physical] form'.<sup>13</sup> This privileges the signifier over the signified, by analogy with music's 'capacity to move us, without first passing through the concrete realm of the *signifiés* [signifieds]': like music, colour 'has no prescribed *signifié* but rather moves directly from the *signe* [i.e., the signifier] to connotation',<sup>14</sup> connotations that are given in a cultural code (for example, blue — especially Mallarmé's *l'Azur* — for the Infinite). In effect, this reverses the accepted relation of forms and attributes. Objects are named *for* their attributes: Rimbaud's vapours, tents, glaciers and cow-parsley are all white. The serial order of the images, however, is determined by shape, another attribute — swirling (vapours): billowing (tents): apex (tent form): lances (glaciers): peaks (king's crowns): pinked form (cow-parsley). I make a distinction between 'shape' and 'form' because only one formal attribute connects consecutive items in the series: thus the progression of images advances metonymically by connecting similar properties. These *correspondances* further signify

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<sup>12</sup> Arthur Rimbaud, 'Voyelles', in *Collected Poems*, ed. and trans. Oliver Bernard (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1962), pp. 171-2. Translation modified.

<sup>13</sup> Françoise Meltzer, 'Color as cognition in Symbolist verse', *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (1978), pp. 253-73, p. 256.

<sup>14</sup> Meltzer, 'Color', p. 259.



coldness (glaciers, shivers) and purity, the connotation of whiteness underlined by *candeurs* (see below). It can be noted that the Symbolist repertoire of such connotations is small. This entails, I think, that the repertoire of objects, that is to say, symbols, used to signify them is necessarily large: the essence of Symbolist poetry lies in the diversity of means, the signifiers, and not the message, constituted as signifieds; there is only one Infinite, but the challenge was to evoke it using the multiplicities of a finite world. Such diversity is controlled semantically by *correspondances* within a colour-class.

The progression of the image series depends, of course, on sonic *correspondances*, more complex than in Baudelaire:

Fig. 7.10

can — deurs	des va-
-peurs et des	
tentes /	
Lances	des gla—ciers
	fiers,
	rois
blancs,	f—rissons
	d'ombelles;

The first phrase is sonically a closed unit: *-eurs* is bounded by *can-* and *tentes*, while *va-* is implanted to correspond with *gla-* in the next phrase. The conditions for *correspondance* are created within this closure. *Candeurs* (translated as 'whiteness', literally, 'guilelessness') is selected to rhyme with *blancs* (its colour class), but it creates a conceptual opposition with *vapeurs*, which implies concealment. Sonic correspondence of the two terms thus supports an opposition but welds it into a discrete semantic unit, in which the 'mystery' can be explained only by preferring 'whiteness' (as a metaphor for purity), the secondary meaning of *candeurs*. *Des tentes*, closing the phrase, corresponding with *lances* in sound and shape, also corresponds via secondary meaning. It is a pun — *des tentes* (of tents)/*détentes* (both 'relaxations' and, operative here, 'thrusts')

[of lances]) — in which the meanings of *détentes* itself are opposed as antonyms, relaxation and thrust (or 'spring'), the first related to *candeurs* as 'guilelessness', the second with *lances*, the consecutive term. These semantic ambiguities are exploited as an extension of *correspondance*, in which association through the attributes of objects is extended to become association through the 'attributes', the fields of meaning, of words. That is to say, *semantic* properties of the signifier are now brought into play, together with its sonic properties: the signifier is becoming reified, an 'object'.

Rimbaud's technique of connecting each phrase (as in *tentes/lances*) becomes more complex sonically with *glaciers fiers / rois*. The repetition of the second morpheme of *glaciers* in *fiers* is in fact a transformation of the vowel (the *r* is pronounced in *fiers*); this connects *fiers* to *rois* because the adjective is both commonly associated with *rois* and ends with the noun's initial *r*. *Blancs* intervenes, but does not sever the connection with the initial sound of *frissons* (*fr-*) that brings together the initials of *fiers* and *rois*: as in *candeurs/vapeurs*, the sonic correspondence here connects disparate terms (proud kings do not shiver), a technique familiar in Baudelaire, in a chain that begins with *glaciers* (*-iers/fiers/rois/fri-*). The line closes with a cadence, *fris-sons/d'om-belles*, in which the last syllable is not involved. This structural 'opening' reveals the purpose of rhyme, which is not to confirm the correspondence of similar terms, but to create larger-scale relations across the sonnet, connecting dissimilar objects through periodicity. Rhyme is a means of formal control, in which content (as rhyme) creates its own 'formal' correspondences with reference to an 'external', predetermined structure (as model).

**7.3** At the end of the intensely creative and reflective Poe-Mallarmé continuum, a Debussy, for example, might have understood his work as a Symbolist musician as follows: because poetry has claimed music so completely, has received Wagner so profoundly, it has become the true location of Symbolist music; music must now be reclaimed from the poets, and this reclamation through composition comes down to this: 'the Wagnerian [*wagnériste*] is he who *understands* Wagner, not he who *imitates* him'.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> *Revue wagnérienne*, Vol. 1 (1885), p. 59.

Symbolist music writes off the debt owed to it *by* literature by incurring its own debt *to* literature: what Baudelaire and Mallarmé borrowed is reclaimed with interest — a new direction for music, beyond the Wagnerian symbol and its innate abstraction, in the deliberate deployment of *correspondances*.

7.4 In Mallarmé, the point is reached where sound is the primary symbolic medium united with its meaning in what is usually called Cratyism.<sup>16</sup> This constitutes a challenge to the Saussurean concept of the sign: far from the relation of signifier and signified being arbitrary, they are consolidated in one event, the sign as an indivisible and necessary connection of sound and sense. Mallarmé revives the ancient debate about necessary, originary links between words and things (a 'vertical' application of the doctrine of *correspondances*) as one solution to the 'crisis' in thinking about language. The Cratyic account of language underpins the musicality of verbal art since the effect of the theory is to erase the distinction between signifier and signified, to insist for example that the opposition of the sonic darkness of 'ombre' and the light of 'clair' is sufficiently located in the signifiers alone, to which the literal signified is a mundane addition or support. The signified may be the origin of the opposition but it is no longer a necessary condition for it. Mallarmé's preoccupation with the 'musicality' of verse proceeds from the fact that music is in the privileged position of asserting correspondences without the troubling divorce of signifier from signified, and with a unity of signifier and Idea in the data of musical expression:

Supreme instrumental passages, consequence of transitory rumblings, flash more truthfully in an illuminated argument than any reasoning ever sustained; one wonders by what terms of our vocabulary, except in the idea, we translate them when listening, because of this incomparable virtue. A direct adaptation to I know not

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<sup>16</sup> Cratyism is defined by Gérard Genette as 'the natural correctness of names', and as another name for 'mimologism', the imitation of the signified in its signifier. The term originates in Plato's dialogue *Cratylus*. See Gérard Genette, *Mimologics*, trans. Thais E. Morgan (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), p. 12. The theory was revived by Walter Benjamin in the form of mimetic 'natural correspondences' in 'The doctrine of the similar' (1933), trans. Knut Tarnowski, *New German Critique*, Vol. 17 (1979), pp. 65-9, and in 'On the mimetic faculty' (1933), in Walter Benjamin, *Reflections*, ed. Peter Demetz, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978), pp. 333-6.

what, in this relation [*contacte*], the slipperiness of feeling, that, by intruding, a word would ruin.<sup>17</sup>

As Steven Cassedy notes, Cratylism applies to language in general and is not a special property of verse, and therefore the crisis in poetry has a different solution based on facts inexplicable by the Cratyllic view.<sup>18</sup> Verse, Mallarmé thought, 'compensates for the shortcoming of languages [and is its] superior complement'. If Cratylism were sufficiently pervasive 'verse would not exist'<sup>19</sup> and language would be representational, an observation that grounds Mallarmé's transcendence of realism: the poet must 'include [...] the horror of the forest, or the silent, scattered thunder in the foliage; not the intrinsic and dead wood of the trees'<sup>20</sup> — not, that is, the physical reality but feeling, sound, attributes, associations, the content of poetic 'suggestion'.

As a simple theory of mimesis which states that meaning inheres *in* words, Cratylism failed to satisfy Mallarmé because it implied an atomism of words and concepts: each word is a discrete entity, with a self-sufficient and closed signifier-signified relation. Mallarmé's alternative view maintains *correspondances* not between signifier and signified but among the *attributes* of the signifieds, and these attributes include the signifiers since they alone in language convey relations. This is an essentialist explanation insofar as the correspondence of attributes locates essences in the signifieds as their 'ultimate reality', or in Mallarmé's term, as Ideas. Cassedy discusses this second theory as opposed to the first, but it seems to me to extend the same Cratyllic logic: Mallarmé's notion of verse as the 'superior complement' of language rests on a 'mimesis of the word', that is, on a Cratylism in the signifiers by analogy with that between the signifier and signified.

It did not escape Mallarmé's notice that the generality of *correspondances* could lead not to meaning but to asemy, a superfluous concentration on the relation of sounds that would distort 'true' meaning for the sake of a specious correspondence. Read as

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<sup>17</sup> Mallarmé, *Le mystère dans les lettres, Oeuvres complètes*, p. 385.

<sup>18</sup> Steven Cassedy, *Flight from Eden: The Origins of Modern Literary Criticism and Theory* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), pp. 64-74.

<sup>19</sup> Mallarmé, *Oeuvres complètes*, p. 364.

<sup>20</sup> Mallarmé, *ibid.*, pp. 365-6.

allegory, his prose poem, *Le démon de l'analogie* (1867)<sup>21</sup> expresses the Symbolist preoccupation with the ultimate, the unattainable: the literary artist aspires to it but is condemned by the medium to something less, something that falls short of it, the penultimate (the tragedy and glory of verbal art, for Mallarmé, is that it must risk failure). As I read it, the poem sustains this allegory (one meaning of *analogie*)<sup>22</sup> by ironising the potential of *correspondances* (another meaning of *analogie*)<sup>22</sup> to lead to enigmas (Nietzsche), to statements that signify, but do not break through the barrier to meaning. In order to embody this in a prose poem, Mallarmé exploits a further musical function of sonic correspondence, the projection of a sound complex through the structure. The 'demon' of analogy is the free, uncontrollable, subconscious tendency for sounds to associate, a libidinal economy of the signifier that rises to the narrator's consciousness as the persistence of a single phrase or phoneme. The narrator is preoccupied with the mysterious lines *La Pénultième / Est morte* (The Penultimate / Is dead), which on reflection comes to include the second line in the first: *nul* contains the meaning of *morte*. But, in spoken French, *nul* is also the penultimate syllable of the word (*-tième* is elided):<sup>23</sup> its presence and emphasis already signifies that the 'penultimate' is null. Mallarmé's virtuosity here inscribes the hidden source of the obsessive phrase within the puzzled narrator's monologue. Introducing *La Pénultième*, the narrator describes his feeling of 'a wing slipping over the strings of an instrument' (*les cordes d'un instrument*), an metaphor for the delicate sound-play imposed by the leitmotivic phrase on the 'strings' of language; and once the phrase is stated, this image is repeated in expanded form (*la corde tendue de l'instrument de musique*). These three phrases share the vowels *-u-* and *-or-*:

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<sup>21</sup> Mallarmé, *Le démon de l'analogie*, *Oeuvres complètes*, pp. 272-4.

<sup>22</sup> '... "analogie" itself is a devil of a word. Conventionally, signifying "resemblance" or "correspondance" it refers here to the many comparisons and parallels perceived and indeed created by the poet with in the text. But [...] it can also come to mean 'reversed' or 'rearranged' on the model of "anagram"'. Roger Pearson, *Unfolding Mallarmé: The Development of a Poetic Art* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), pp. 77-8. Pearson offers a more detailed reading than mine, with the purpose of revealing 'the ways in which Mallarmé now sees language as generating a world of its own' (p. 72). See Pearson, *ibid.*, pp. 72-82.

<sup>23</sup> On this, see Pearson, *ibid.*, p. 75.

Fig. 7.11

les <u>cor</u> des	d' <u>un</u>
	in-str <u>u</u> -ment /
La Pé-n <u>u</u> l-tième	
	[Est]
Est m <u>or</u> te /	
la <u>cor</u> de	ten-d <u>ue</u>
	d' <u>un</u>
	in- str <u>u</u> -ment
	de <u>mus</u> -ique.

The 'instrument', attached to the central phrase itself, is another leitmotif made concrete at the end when the narrator finds himself 'instinctively' (as if by chance) outside 'an instrument-maker's shop selling old instruments hung on the wall' (*la boutique d'un luthier vendeur des vieux instruments pendus au mur*). (Lacan's symbolic order breaks through to the real.) Here -u- undergoes multiple repetition, together with the interversion of -nul- in *un lu-*. Sonic correspondences are thus projected through the poem, determining its 'poetic' structure and — importantly — its narrative sequence. A chance 'analogy' of *les cordes....* and *La Pénultième...* diverts the narrator 'physically' to *la boutique...*, and the relations of signifiers therefore control action, a domain that would normally constitute the plane of the signifieds. Anticipating Freud, Lacan, and Bataille's *Story of the Eye*,<sup>24</sup> Mallarmé's subconscious *correspondances* influence the narrator's behaviour: he is controlled by language, in the sense that he seems to have no choice but to find himself in a situation dominated and determined by -u-, a control dramatised by Mallarmé in the narrator's pervasive sense of compulsion, the conscious aspect of libidinal, aleatoric relations of the verbal signifiers.

<sup>24</sup> See Roland Barthes, 'The metaphor of the eye', trans J. A. Underwood, in Georges Bataille, *Story of the Eye* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982), pp. 119-27. Barthes shows that narrative location, and by extension, the plot are determined by a chain of metaphor: 'if we are in a park at night it is in order that the moon can emerge from the clouds to shine on the wet stain in the middle of Marcelle's sheet as it flaps from the window; if we visit Madrid it is in order that there shall be a bullfight, with the offering of the bull's raw balls and the putting out of Granero's eye; if we go on to Seville it is in order that the sky shall exude the yellowish, liquid luminosity whose metaphorical nature we are familiar with from the rest of the chain' (p. 123).

Mallarmé's 'demon' of analogy revisits the dual function of repetition and similarity as the uncanny, and as the ground of all poetic discourse. Analogy, however, extends beyond sonic *correspondance*. In 1893 (the year of *Pelléas*), Mallarmé wrote to Edmund Gosse:

I make music, and therefore call music not that which can be drawn from the euphonic connection [*rapprochement*] of words, this primary condition is taken for granted [*va en soi*]; but, beyond it magically produced by certain dispositions of the word, in which the word is restricted to the state of being the material means of communication with the reader, like the keys of a piano. In reality, between the lines and above appearance [*regard*] communication takes place, in all purity, without the mediation [*entremise*] of gut strings and pistons as in the orchestra, which is almost industrial; but it is the same thing as the orchestra, except literarily or silently. [...] Employ Music in the Greek sense, fundamentally signifying the Idea or the rhythm of its relations; and in that, [it is] more divine than in public or symphonic expression.<sup>25</sup>

The elaboration of the Mallarméan Idea transcends 'mere' analogy, as much a curse as a virtue, to reach the subtle relationality beneath contrasts and difference: the word, the signifier, has become explicitly 'material' here, and this leads Mallarmé to value the features of the deconstructed signifier as the ground of poetic (private), in opposition to symphonic (public), expression.<sup>26</sup> Thus, the dimensions of the signifier (phonemes, rhythm, nuance) are projected and back-projected in a text, so that, in effect, the text becomes not only the expression of the Idea, but the commanding statement of it: indirect communication, indirect discourse (§5.4).

<sup>25</sup> Mallarmé, letter to Edmund Gosse, 10 January 1893, in Stéphane Mallarmé, *Correspondance*, ed. Bertrand Marchal (Paris: Gallimard, 1995), p. 614.

<sup>26</sup> The indebtedness to music of Mallarmé's 'material' signifiers and the extent to which he adopted aesthetic principles derived from music are considered in Michael Zimmerman, *Träumerei eines französischen Dichters: Stéphane Mallarmé und Richard Wagner* (Munich: Katzschler, 1981). After reading Wagner's 'Lettre sur la musique' (1860), Mallarmé put into literary practice the principle of eliminating 'meaningless' transitional passages that Wagner had identified as the sign of Beethovenian innovation and stylistic progress. Mallarmé's essay on Wagner, *Richard Wagner: Rêverie d'un Poète français* (1885) (*Oeuvres complètes*, pp. 541-6), is the first attempt to create a new literary genre, the 'poème critique', in which Mallarmé applies 'Beethovenian' method of non-redundancy to literature by creating a prose style which is meaningful even in its rhythm and appearance on the page. Zimmerman's critical account of this application of 'musicality' traverses Mallarmé's involvement with the *Revue wagnérienne*, and hinges the 'dialectical' relationship of music and literature in Mallarmé's thought: in Mallarmé's words, 'music and literature are two sides of a coin, one turned toward the shadows (*l'obscur*), the other glinting, certainly, with a phenomenon, the only one, which I call the Idea' (*Oeuvres complètes*, p. 649). Thus, the Idea is real (a phenomenon), and "Idealism" implies in Mallarmé not a metaphysical stance but a methodical reflection on the semiotic character of the material of his art' (p. 21).

## 8: Tropes

**8.1** Maeterlinck, Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Mallarmé: all four project the Idea through the structure of the text by means of the varied techniques of *correspondance*. As Baudelaire remarked, this applies also to music itself, to Wagner without words:

without the poetry Wagner's music would still be a poetic work, endowed as it is with all the qualities that go to make a well-organised poem; self-explanatory, so well are its component parts united, integrated, mutually adapted, and if I may invent a word to express the superlative of a quality, prudently *concatenated*.<sup>1</sup>

Structure, as *correspondance*, can therefore determine meaning: relational complexes are established through repetition of sounds (aleatoric, libidinal relations) and syntactic structure (models and pre-determined, 'external' modes of relation). Such complexes are heuristic in that they reveal or assert similarities among differences, in order to discover connections within the plural world of objects and events. The aesthetic revolution of Symbolism is therefore a re-orientation of world-view that, in order to prevail after Baudelaire, entails a revolution in poetic technique, as specified, for example in Moréas's manifesto:

symbolism requires an archetypal and complex style: unpolluted terms [...] signifying pleonasm, mysterious ellipses, unresolved [*en suspens*] anacoluthon, all the bold and multifarious [*multiforme*] tropes [...] ancient metres revived; an expertly well-ordered disorder; illuminating [*illucescent*] rhyme; together with rhyme of recondite fluidity; multiple and mobile breaks in the alexandrine; the use of particular numbers [of syllables] (primarily — seven, nine, eleven, thirteen — resolved into the various rhythmic combinations they add up to).<sup>2</sup>

These techniques provide the shock of the new and enigmatic, rejecting the features of Baudelaire's 'well-organised poem' to reach beyond ambiguity to a reality, 'primordial Ideas', that cannot be stated nakedly. Moréas's list of stylistic features defines far-reaching

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<sup>1</sup> Baudelaire, 'Richard Wagner and *Tannhäuser* in Paris', p. 351. Italics in the original.

<sup>2</sup> Moréas, 'Le symbolisme', p. 32.



technical innovation established according to the principles of purity, multiplicity, discontinuity, grammatical breakdown (anacoluthon), figural language, a grounding in traditional techniques (alexandrine), an aleatoric ('mobile') re-making of them, and odd-numbered rhythmic patterns. Some of this is negative definition, countering classicism ('an expertly well-ordered disorder') and realism ('mysterious ellipses'), but the essential strategy is to open a window onto ungraspable meaning by means of aporia and discontinuity in the syntactical disruption of the syntagm. Literal and logical sense is rejected in favour of a style that allows all parts to speak to one another, to 'correspond', to become necessary, overlapping and pleonastic. The 'musicality' of this stylistic definition is obvious, particularly its self- and multi-referential aspects. Music made in the image of the manifesto might resemble Debussy's fluidity of phrase structure, discontinuity (as opposition of material), 'grammatical' unorthodoxy (Moréas's anacoluthon), ellipsis, and — especially — pleonasm, in the form of repetition and multiple relationships projected across and through opposition, which has a privileged role in Debussy's music and thought.<sup>3</sup>

**8.2** Like Moréas's manifesto, music theory accurately reflects, often unwittingly, the features of the early modernist condition in late 19th- and early 20th-century music, elevating the plane of discontinuity to prime position, and affirming the value of opposition. When contrast and opposition are not resolved (or at least tamed) in the context of a metacritique, they are explained as a feature of the idea, or as held in balance. But the latter two are minimal conditions for any structure. Whatever the structural function of oppositions might be, we lack descriptions of their internal moment-to-moment continuity. Thus, music theory can be deaf to the possibility that opposition itself can be a relation, a mode of connection between disparate units, and that the creative value of opposition transcends simple juxtaposition or contrast. Among the classic oppositions — part/whole, continuity/discontinuity, identity/opposition — opposition

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<sup>3</sup> A consideration of this issue appears in Jonathan Dunsby's 'The Poetry of *En blanc et noir*', in Craig Ayrey and Mark Everist (eds), *Analytical Strategies and Musical Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 149-68.

itself is present in an opposed pair: it therefore has special place in musical structure as both the ground of theoretical concepts and as one of its functions,<sup>4</sup> and is marked in the problematic of theory.

Opposition is one of Aristotle's three types of the association of ideas.<sup>5</sup> In his discussion of the three 'qualities' of association, the other two, similarity and proximity, are adopted also by Hume as resemblance and contiguity in time or place (the third is 'cause and effect').<sup>6</sup> Opposition ('contrariety', 'distance') is included as one of seven types of 'philosophical' relation since it is specifically 'in philosophy' (rather than in 'common language') that

we extend it [relation] to mean any particular subject of comparison, without a connecting principle. Thus distance will be allowed by philosophers to be a true relation because we acquire an idea of it by the comparing of objects.<sup>7</sup>

Hume maintains this category of *conceptual* distance in the realm of ideas, outside space and time. Bergson is probably right to argue in his critique of associationism (such as Hume's) that this category is artificial, an appearance only; but this is precisely its value. Hume's distance-relation is an active process which captures, perhaps unintentionally, an essential aspect of the creative process in language — the act of bringing disparate elements into a semantic relationship. Opposition is therefore a creative relation, as Richards makes clear:

As the two things put together are more remote, the tension created is, of course, greater. [...] bafflement is an experience of which we soon tire, and rightly. But, as we know, what seems an impossible connection, an 'impractical identification', can

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<sup>4</sup> In a discussion of sexual difference, Bennington remarks that 'all our difficulties are going to be concentrated on understanding this *différance* between difference and opposition' (Bennington, *Derridabase*, p. 208). Opposition is 'irreducible difference', something marked out as functioning differentially.

<sup>5</sup> *De Memoria et Reminiscentia*, §451<sup>b</sup>18, trans. and ed. Richard Sorabji in *Aristotle on Memory* (London: Duckworth, 1972), p. 54.

<sup>6</sup> Hume does exclude one type of opposition, 'difference' in number or in kind which he describes as a 'negation of relation'. David Hume, *A Treatise on Human Nature*, ed. Ernest C. Mossner (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), p. 62. Symbolist *correspondances*, of course, depend on the relation of differences in kind.

<sup>7</sup> Hume, *Treatise*, p. 61.

at once turn into an easy and powerful adjustment if the right hint comes from the rest of the discourse.<sup>8</sup>

Richards's 'tension' emphasises that opposition as a relation brings to light a dimension of resemblance in the opposed terms which co-exists with the differential tension, and this notion of opposition is essential in all figurative language, the tropes of rhetoric. The conceptualisation of rhetoric I invoke here is not the 'old Rhetoric' (described by Richards as 'the rationale of pleadings and persuadings') but a 'revised rhetoric' that

must undertake its own enquiry into the modes of meaning [...] on a microscopic scale by using theorems about the structure of the fundamental conjectural units of meaning and the conditions through which they and their interconnections arise.<sup>9</sup>

Predicated on the non-literal ('*conjectural* units of meaning'), while insisting on analytical methods (in the form of 'theorems') that can be elaborated to reveal the structure of units and their relations ('interconnections'), Richards's definition entails that all rhetorical theorems will depend on a particular, individual reading of structural relations and that the rhetorical categories to which they are ascribed will depend on the nature of this reading.

This necessary esthesis is emphasised by Empson:

[...] two statements are made as if they were connected, and the reader is forced to consider their relations for himself. The reason why these facts should have been selected for a poem is left for him to invent: he will invent a variety of reasons and order them in his own mind. This, I think, is the fundamental fact about the poetical use of language.<sup>10</sup>

The essential question here is the degree of resemblance which entails a creative grasp of the similar within difference. Whether Empson's 'statements', or two musical events, are

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<sup>8</sup> I. A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* [1936] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 125-6.

<sup>9</sup> Richards, *ibid.*, pp. 23-4. The 'old' rhetoric, described by Aristotle as 'the art of persuasion' is the conception traditionally applied to music, in, for example, considerations of music as metaphor. The most extended recent study of this type is Mark Evan Bonds, *Wordless Rhetoric: Musical Form and the Metaphor of the Oration* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991). Bonds places his study firmly within the Aristotelian tradition (see p. 5) to which his 18th- and 19th-century repertoire is suited. The Aristotelian conception, however, seems to me inapplicable to Debussy, and is not discussed in detail here.

<sup>10</sup> William Empson, *Seven Types of Ambiguity* [1930] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961), p. 25.

equivalent or opposed, similar or different, is a decision for the reader/analyst, and in this connection a footnote in de Man makes a profound statement: 'tropes are transformational systems rather than grids'.<sup>11</sup> This is to say that a trope operates as the transformation of one of its elements in the terms of the other, and that this process is reciprocal. De Man rejects the simple structure of tropes as selection (common to metonymy, metaphor and synecdoche) from a paradigmatic stock which can only be classified, and a taxonomy can only come into existence, once the troping has occurred. In literature, there is nothing 'given' about the relation created in using 'swan' for 'woman' (a metaphor) or 'Crown' for 'King' (a metonymy), however inevitable they may appear through familiarity or contingent association; and thus the music analyst's classification of equivalent terms into opposing paradigms can be considered to rob musical structure of what is musical in it. As a corrective to the theoretical deadening of figuration, 'pleonasm' in Moréas's manifesto articulates clearly the pervasive figuration of poetic discourse, and expresses a distinctively modern creative strategy.

**8.3** In Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, metaphor dominates many other figures, including metonymy, because each involves the substitution of one term for another and some aspect of semantic resemblance.<sup>12</sup> Metaphor is therefore used generically to capture an essential feature of figural language, the exploitation or assertion of similarity (resemblance) within difference. Lacan's definition is only slightly less broad: metaphor is 'one word for another'; metonymy is a matter of 'word to word connection' within the signifying chain.<sup>13</sup> Quite simply, this definition identifies metaphor as paradigmatic and metonymy as syntagmatic, as in Lacan's source, Jakobson's 'Two aspects of language': metaphor is equated with the paradigmatic plane of language and metonymy with the

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<sup>11</sup> de Man, *Allegories*, p. 63, note 8.

<sup>12</sup> Aristotle, *The Art of Rhetoric*, trans. Hugh Lawson-Tancred (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991), pp. 224-5 and pp. 234-41. For a full discussion of Aristotle's view see David E. Cooper, *Metaphor* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986).

<sup>13</sup> Jacques Lacan, 'The agency of the letter in the unconscious, or reason since Freud' in *Ecrits*, pp. 156-7.

syntagmatic plane because they comprise relations of similarity and contiguity respectively.<sup>14</sup> Glossing this formulation, Barthes writes that

Rhetoric as a whole will no doubt prove to be the domain [...] of creative transgressions; if we remember Jakobson's distinction, we shall understand that any metaphoric series is a syntagmised paradigm, and any metonymy a syntagm which is frozen and absorbed into a system [i.e. a paradigm]; in metaphor, selection becomes contiguity, and in metonymy, contiguity becomes a field to select from. It therefore seems that it is always on the frontiers of the two planes that creation has a chance to occur.<sup>15</sup>

Taking Jakobson's own example, a metaphor for 'hut' is 'den' since this is a relation of similarity (one word from a paradigmatic stock of equivalences is substituted for another, 'one word for another' in Lacan); a metonymy for 'hut' is 'thatch' since this is a relation of contiguity — that is, 'thatch' is a property of the thing it stands for. In the metonymy two terms are positionally contiguous because there is a genitive relation between them (for example, 'thatch of the hut'), corresponding to Lacan's 'word-to-word connection'. There is no such relationship available in metaphor ('den of the hut', for instance, is nonsensical unless 'den' is read as a culturally-specific North American metaphor, in which case the whole phrase becomes metonymic).

The origin of this distinction is Saussure's definition of associative (that is, paradigmatic) and syntagmatic relations, but metaphor and metonymy are not absolutely identical with them. Positional similarity, which Jakobson defines as 'the capacity for two words to replace one another', is common to both the paradigm and metaphor; positional contiguity, on the other hand is the possibility for two words to combine with one another<sup>16</sup> as in syntax which is solely a syntagmatic function. As Metz defines it, the positional axis is that axis of the discursive chain constituted by the signifiers: positional similarity is another term for 'paradigmatic', and positional contiguity is 'syntagmatic'.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Jakobson, 'Two aspects of language and two types of aphasic disturbances', in Roman Jakobson and Morris Halle, *Fundamentals of Language* (The Hague: Mouton, 1956), pp. 69-96,

<sup>15</sup> Barthes, *Elements of semiology*, pp. 87-8.

<sup>16</sup> See Russell Grigg, 'Metaphor and Metonymy', *Newsletter of the Freudian Field*, Vol. 3, Nos 1-2 (1989), p. 60.

<sup>17</sup> Christian Metz, *Psychoanalysis and Cinema: the Imaginary Signifier*, trans. Celia Britton, Annwyl Williams, Ben Brewster and Alfred Guzzetti (London: Macmillan, 1982), p. 184.

However, the pervasiveness of positional similarity in language presents a difficulty for Jakobson: because, like metaphor, metonymy is a substitution, it obviously also relies on positional *similarity* and therefore on a paradigmatic relation — a feature which erases the distinction (at this level of description) between metonymy and metaphor. Jakobson therefore makes a further distinction between 'positional' and 'semantic' relations in order to maintain the contiguity inherent in metonymy. The difference between metaphor and metonymy is said to be a difference between *semantic* similarity and *semantic* contiguity<sup>18</sup> (Metz notes that contiguity must be understood as 'conceptual' contiguity, and not in the narrowly spatial sense).<sup>19</sup> In our example, 'den' and 'hut' can now be distinguished as semantically similar and metaphorical, while 'thatch' and 'hut' are semantically contiguous and metonymic.

Because the simple identification of the two tropes with the paradigm and the syntagm is supplemented by <sup>α</sup>second level of description, Metz writes that 'metaphor and metonymy operate by definition on similarities or contiguities which are perceived or felt to exist between the *referents* of the two units involved in the figure (or between the signifieds...):'<sup>20</sup> similarity and contiguity have their existence beyond the signifier, as does any relation based on properties. Vickers concludes that this 'semantic problem' besets all theories of musical rhetoric, since

the prime difference between language and music is that language has a constant semantic dimension, uses words with definite meanings — subject of course to personal and regional differences: but these too can be registered — while music has no such fixed system of denotation.<sup>21</sup>

Thus, 'even the most dedicated student of rhetoric will ultimately have to admit that in dealing with music we soon reach the limits of rhetoric, for we reach the limits of language'.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, if music has no semantic level, except perhaps that created by

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<sup>18</sup> Jakobson, 'Two aspects of language', pp. 254-5.

<sup>19</sup> Metz, *Psychoanalysis and Cinema*, p. 178.

<sup>20</sup> Metz, *ibid.*, p. 184. Italics in the original.

<sup>21</sup> Brian Vickers, *In Defence of Rhetoric* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988), pp. 364-5.

<sup>22</sup> Brian Vickers, 'Figures of Rhetoric/Figures of Music?', *Rhetorica*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (1984), pp. 1-44; p. 41. Susan Langer's arguments are invoked to support this view: 'music, though clearly a symbolic

self-reference, then a tropic structure will be indistinguishable from an isologic one. For all Vickers's sophistication, he is unable to transcend this primary difficulty in conceiving music as a figural structure because he clings to traditional and generalised conceptions of music, rhetoric and language. If, however, the essential requirement for figural structure is a capacity for reference (and, by extension, representation), then the self-reference of the deconstructed musical signifier (§3.1) meets this requirement: the signifier is internally 'split', so that it can refer introversively to other units, or indeed to a further structural signifier. This duality of the signifier establishes the conditions for a transfer of the figural principle to music in which self-reference is exploited.

**8.4** In music, positional similarity and contiguity have a basic function in the reference of musical units to grammatical contexts as chord or set types. A chord inversion ( $\delta_3$ ,  $\delta_5$  etc.) refers to a grammatical context (I, V etc), and an ordered set stands for a set-type (whole-tone, diatonic, etc.). For example: in tonal harmony a  $\delta_3$  chord on E can either represent a C tonic (as 'tonic-ness') or <sup>refer</sup> to some other tonicised chord for which it will have a prolongational role. Similarly, in pc set theory, set 3-11 may represent a diatonic triad (major or minor) and thus 'diatonic-ness', but it can also be octatonic, pentatonic and so on, depending on the context, as in the case of the linguistic figures. The fundamental duality in the musical signifier (the capacity to act as the representative of a larger class) exemplifies the principle of positional *contiguity*, while positional *similarity* is present in the capacity for the substitution of chord inversions ( $\delta_3$  replacing  $\delta_3$ ) and different orderings of a set. Semantic *contiguity* (metonymy) is exemplified in subset/superset relations, literal complements, and in added-note chords (for example, the added 6th) and subtractions (vii for V<sup>7</sup>). Semantic *similarity* (metaphor) begins when the conventional chord-substitutions in tonal harmony (ii for IV, iii for I, etc.) are applied, or when one set substitutes for another within the same set type (for example, 3-7 [0, 2, 5] as a substitution for 3-9 [0, 2, 7] within the pentatonic set 5-35\*I [0, 2, 4, 7, 9]). Full semantic similarity occurs in tonality when there is a similarity in function, but a variation

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form is an unconsummated symbol [...] expressiveness, not expression' (Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, p. 204), and 'not communication but insight is the gift of music' (p. 207).

of normal substitution (bV for V, etc.), and in set analysis when one set is the non-literal complement of another (literal complements are metonymies), or, under certain conditions in Debussy, when a set representing a set type replaces another in a pre-defined string of set types (see §8.18 and Ex. 17).

Such a conceptual transfer of the figural principle fulfils the minimal conditions for metaphor and metonymy: in fact, since it seems to be inscribed in the fabric of structural relations as defined by non-Schenkerian tonal harmony and pitch-class set theory, the operation may seem trivial and superfluous. This, I think, is because many relations in the scheme outlined above comprise the equivalent of 'dead metaphors' (like 'the mouth of the river'), expressions that have become normative and have lost their figural power (they do of course retain structural logic). However, because the scheme emphasises both the existence of harmonic relations *in absentia* (between absent and present 'units', as a signifier to an absent signified) which is a pervasive feature in the creation of figures, and the capacity for 'vertical' relations within a harmonic system, it establishes the ground for living metaphorical and metonymic operations: a figure would come into being when a non-normative substitution is made or when two systems converge — when, for example, in music set 3-11 (representing the diatonic) also acts as a  $6_3$  chord representing the tonic, and when, in literature, 'swan' ('animal system') is a metaphor for woman ('human system').

Similar non-normative operations are at work in the language-trope. In Metz's example of metaphor, 'this great genius, like an eagle', both terms are present in the figure (strictly speaking, this is a simile): but 'eagle' can stand for 'genius', a capacity for substitution based fundamentally on semantic properties (that is, it depends on semantic similarity). Positional similarity, of course, is an essential requirement, but this alone would allow any noun (since 'genius' is a noun) to be a substitution,<sup>23</sup> the choice restricted only by grammatical category and the constraints of syntax. Take, for example, 'the horse ran'/'the car ran'; or 'the car started'/'the horse started'. Here the potential substitution

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<sup>23</sup> For example, the 'figure' 'this great genius, like an egg', works badly because the semantic similarity is minimal: if substitution were applied, as in 'this egg' standing for 'genius', the result would be not metaphor but catachresis (the wrong word).



'horse/car' is restricted by grammatical category (noun) and the meaning of the verb in each case: but the noun-substitution also alters the meaning of the verb. Thus grammatical and syntactic categories are operative, but there is a transfer of meaning (a figural movement) within these constraints, and from one part of speech to the other. The boundaries of meaningful substitution in language therefore can be also determined partly by syntax: in music, too, syntactic relations are operative in the sense that some functional or connective principle will always determine a tropic relation of units, except when units are determinately opposed.

8.5 Unlike language, however, both music and film raise the problem of figures *in praesentia* — in Metz's formulation, metaphor and metonymy presented syntagmatically. A sequence from Chaplin's *Modern Times*, the image of a flock of sheep followed by a shot of a crowd struggling at the entrance of an underground station, is classified as metaphor presented syntagmatically: the images are similar (one could replace the other) and are combined in succession. Metonymy presented syntagmatically is a much weaker figure, exemplified by an image from Fritz Lang's *M*. A child and her balloon are associated in the narrative discourse (the 'diegesis') since the balloon is her toy, and they appear on the screen together (if one were to replace the other, the figure would be classified as metonymy presented paradigmatically). In music, the syntagmatic presentation of figures creates 'horizontal' relations, the primary ground for the self-reference of the signifiers which most productively moves backwards and forwards in the syntagm (rather than shuttling up and down between the two 'vertical' levels of the single signifier's dead metaphors).

Since Metz notes that cinematic figures must be conceived independently of word-based rhetoric,<sup>24</sup> it could be assumed that music must also be distinguished from film, if only because film is a visual medium. Here we encounter another Symbolist complication: no sooner had Pater made his famous aesthetic declaration that 'all arts aspire to the condition of music' than Debussy began to speak of music as a succession of

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<sup>24</sup> Metz, *Psychoanalysis and Cinema*, pp. 212-28 passim.

images, the focus of his surprising enthusiasm for Richard Strauss (on *Ein Heldenleben*: 'Once again it's a book of images, it's even cinematography. [...] a man who constructs such a work with such *continuity* in the effort is quite near to being a genius'.)<sup>25</sup> Like music, the image-structure of film is an art of continuity in which oppositions are both the pre-requisite of meaning and a challenge to it: that is, relations among contiguous differences must be established in order that continuity does not dissolve into the meaninglessness of pure succession.<sup>26</sup>

**8.6** Because relations in both music and film must be established by the viewer/listener, the act of analytical interpretation is primary, even pre-linguistic, a movement of signification within general semiology<sup>27</sup> which organises itself along the trajectories of similarity and contiguity. This is why, in common with many literary theorists (de Man, Genette and others), Metz writes that

usually we are dealing with figurations which are both metaphorical and metonymic [...]: one term suggests another because they *evoke* each other by virtue of their proximity, and also because they *resemble* each other in some respect.<sup>28</sup>

This statement is overtly indebted to Lacan's observation that metaphor and metonymy are united by their common exploitation of semantic contiguity. The semantic level is essentially the domain of the signifieds in which there is no syntagmatic organisation, as Lacan recognised (at least implicitly). This 'second level' is therefore paradigmatic; for the construction of the tropes to be established, any two terms must be regarded as paradigmatically equivalent within the structure of the trope (this is the origin of Richards's 'tension' as a primary discursive function). Metaphor, in Françoise Meltzer's paraphrase of Lacan's dispersed discussion of the topic, is said to be 'contiguous within a large field' (i.e. the paradigm) so that, for example, 'Volkswagen' and its metaphor

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<sup>25</sup> Debussy, 'Richard Strauss', *Gil Blas*, 30 March, 1903. Quoted in Langham Smith, 'Debussy and the cinema', pp. 68-9. My italics.

<sup>26</sup> While some of these features are shared by language, especially the universal 'system of differences', language installs them firstly in the phoneme — a pre-signifying level in music and film — and only secondarily in the signifiers.

<sup>27</sup> See Metz, *Psychoanalysis and Cinema*, p. 219.

<sup>28</sup> Metz, *Psychoanalysis and Cinema*, p. 200. Italics in the original.

'prancing steed' are semantically *contiguous* within the field of transportation.<sup>29</sup>

Metaphor is therefore metonymised in Lacan: the difference is that the connection between the terms in the metaphor given is made by the interpreter (Empson's 'reader') and is not physically inherent in the comparison as it is in true metonymy. With semantics established as an interpretive construction, Lacan can conceive metaphor and metonymy as located primarily in the domain of the signifiers, with the proviso that metaphor eventually crosses the 'bar' between signifier and signified to reach the repressed referent of the trope. But Lacan also maintains that metaphor must not be seen as analogy (a 'non-contiguous figure which insists upon totality')<sup>30</sup> which maintains a one-to-one correspondence with the signifieds at each point in the discourse. By revealing, in effect, a merging of metaphor and metonymy on Jakobson's semantic level,<sup>31</sup> Lacan reveals the superfluity of semantics in language as psychoanalytically conceived, except when words penetrate to a fundamental truth (§3.1d). Matching the rhetorical modes of musical and psychoanalytic discourse — similarly mobile and ludic (exhibiting 'free play' in Derrida's sense) — is productive since both are essentially concerned with the activity and relations of the signifiers, in which the signified is elusive or perpetually retreats to the position of a further signifier. As Lacan writes of psychoanalytical discourse, 'the signifier, as such signifies nothing': 'experience proves it — the more the signifier signifies nothing, the more indestructible it is',<sup>32</sup> and thus for the speaker the signifier takes over the function of the signified.

**8.7** Lacan's 'esthetic' conception of metaphor and metonymy suggests that they, like all other tropes, are essentially heuristic devices for the discovery of meaning. As Metz has demonstrated, they can also be projected analytically onto a hospitable medium to reveal the structure of aesthetically meaningful objects. Broad theoretical synopses can be

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<sup>29</sup> Françoise Meltzer, 'Eat your Dasein: Lacan's self-consuming puns', in Jonathan Culler (ed.), *On Puns: The Foundation of Letters* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), p. 156-63.

<sup>30</sup> Meltzer, 'Eat your Dasein', p. 159

<sup>31</sup> Lacan's reinterpretation of Jakobson is outlined in Grigg, 'Metaphor and Metonymy'.

<sup>32</sup> Jacques Lacan, 'The signifier, as such, signifies nothing', in *The Psychoses: The Seminars of Jacques Lacan, Book 3, 1955-1956*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Russell Grigg (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 185.

instantiated only in relation to specific examples. Confronting Jakobson with the Prelude to *Pelléas* in the light of Metz and Lacan, I use only the concepts of positional similarity and contiguity (which pertain specifically to the relation of signifiers) and the 'syntagmatic' (or horizontal) form of the metaphor and metonymy. I restrict this application initially to melody, a first (though not necessarily primary) level of structure in which positional relations are clearest. While positional similarity (metaphor) is observed primarily within the paradigm and positional contiguity (metonymy) within the syntagm (as in Jakobson), it will be seen that contiguity also exists among the paradigms, that is in oppositional units; this reflects the pervasiveness of positional similarity noted above. This merging reveals specific instances of the tendency of metaphor to resolve into metonymy as Lacan leads us to expect, and demonstrates the detail of Richards's instatement of resemblance within opposition.

Ruwet's analysis of the Prelude<sup>33</sup> together with Nattiez's revisions<sup>34</sup> is displayed paradigmatically in Ex. 11. Ruwet groups the eight paradigms (*a-i*) as far as possible into units of equal duration (1.111, 1.112, etc.), with the resultant paradigmatic relations forming the 'dialectic of the repeated and the non-repeated'. A by-product of Nattiez's revisions (shown as transformations in brackets on the example) has particular interest here. Units *e* and *e'* are a single unit in Ruwet, while units *f*, *f'*, *g* and *i* are all transformations of earlier units. Thus, Ruwet's analysis attempts to duplicate the pattern (*f f g*) (*h h i*), when in fact, as Nattiez shows, the transformations (marked *T*) would break it up. Nattiez's revisions also reveal that there is apparently no new material between bars 16-20, which is in effect the end of the Prelude. (The curtain rises in bars 21-3, a section which is clearly both cadential and transitional). These revisions unravel the relentlessly metaphoric character of Ruwet's analysis in which connections among the units are minimal because they are either exact repetitions or simple transformations exemplifying the features of similarity and totality in Lacan's 'metaphor'. Ruwet also obscures the primary feature of the character-<sup>themes</sup> in *Pelléas*, that each can be transformed into another.

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<sup>33</sup> Ruwet, 'Duplications', p. 91.

<sup>34</sup> Nattiez, *Fondements*, p. 252.

Nattiez's revision of bars 16-23 moves towards this metonymy, in that the equivalence of units  $e$ ,  $e'$ ,  $f$ , and  $f'$  points to a greater number of more complex transformations, and thus a chain of 'word to word', unit-to-unit connections. Nattiez's own analyses (that of Debussy's *Syrinx*, for example) are consistent with this tendency to reveal metonymic connections: the paradigms are larger, the transformations more numerous, to the point where a separate table of melodic variables is required to capture the complexity of the relationships. Thus, metonymic connections can be present within a paradigm, but only if the equivalence of units is seen as multivalent. At this stage, then, it would appear that a metaphoric paradigmatic analysis may be defined as one in which there is a proliferation of paradigms privileging opposition (as in Ruwet) and a metonymic analysis as one characterised by fewer, but larger, more inclusive paradigms privileging similarity. It must be said here that Ex. 11 merely lays the ground for a tropic analysis since there is no identification of the transfer of properties outside the general category of equivalence among the units. Provisionally, though, it seems clear that metaphor is resolved into metonymy as a result of the analytical reduction of tension between units, the erasure of difference.

**8.8** This tendency must be both resisted and pursued: oppositions must be maintained if the analytical reduction to the 'same' is to be resisted, but, on the other hand, this interpretive control cannot always be sustained against the insistence of the musical work. Ex. 12 shows a paradigmatic analysis according to three criteria in descending order of priority: i) the first note (D, G, Ab); ii) emphasis of the second beat of the bar; iii) melodic shape. This reveals that the units of bars 1-10, which all begin with D, form a large paradigm in which a process can be observed: that is, the processive emphasis of the second half of the bar and then the second beat of the bar (indicated by the dotted line) through register (in b. 1), repetition (b. 3), syncopation (b. 5), and the dotted upbeat (b. 6). Bars 12-13 show the same process operating on the G-A shape of bars 8-9. This shift from the first to the second bar of the opening unit (bars 1-2) in bars 7-8 reveals a processive rather than a dialectical function for the repetition of the opening material.

That is, the repetition in bars 8-10 is required to begin the process that will propel the structure of the Prelude. The shift to the G-A leads to the new transposition on Ab (b.14) where the melodic shape (the rising tone) is retained but now loses the second-beat emphasis and is followed by a transformation. In this first paradigm (bars 1-13) there is a mixture of metaphoric and metonymic features. Positional similarity (as metaphor) exists in conjunction with positional contiguity (as metonymy), but none of the units is completely static: each contributes to the primary process of transformation, the emphasis of the second beat, so that the structure is primarily metonymic even though three distinctly opposed blocs (signalled by the initial notes D, G and Ab) are consolidated.

The second large section (bars 14-19) is metonymic in a more restricted sense. The continuous transformations beginning with the minor 3rd Ab-F (x) of b. 16 are taken from the new element in b. 14, the augmented second C#-Bb. In b. 20, though, there is a return to the G-A paradigm, while bars 21-23 incorporate features of both paradigm I (beginning on D, second beat emphasis) and paradigm II (the descending third). Bars 21-23, placed in both paradigms, exemplify the complexity of metaphoric relations. Positional contiguity is absent, but there is a complex positional similarity: in this and other cases where a double entry seems necessary, such paradigmatic over-determination demonstrates the truth of Lacan's 'metaphor' in which units tend toward structural contiguity within a large field of associations (thus mimicking Jakobson's 'semantic contiguity').

**8.8a** Generally observed, the Prelude is laid out on two axes, D and Ab, which define a binary opposition intervallically: the tritone therefore divides the piece into two formal sections (bars 1-13, 14-23) which cut across the division at b. 12 suggested by the bass Bb. The supplementary division at b. 14 is confirmed by the durational structure of the Prelude generated by the second-beat emphasis of Ex. 12 and which functions analogously to the syntactic function of poetic rhyme. Ex. 13 shows the Prelude segmented into four 'couplets', each containing two opposed blocks of material: this alone installs a structural regularity comparable to a rhyme scheme. An explicit rhyme function

is present in couplets 1 and 2, and less obviously in couplet 4 which picks up the 'internal rhyme' of bars 1-4 and 8-11. The complete scheme is therefore AABA'. Furthermore, the second-beat emphasis on which these rhymes depend is disseminated as a two-tier durational structure for each couplet, augmented and diminished both syntagmatically and contrapuntally. To clarify: in couplet 1, the upper voice has two  $4_2$  units followed by two units in  $4_4$ , while the lower voice has one  $4_1$  unit followed by one unit in  $4_2$ . In each unit the second beat is accented, sometimes explicitly (as in bars 5-6, lower voice) or less markedly (bars 1-4, lower voice). This structure is repeated exactly in couplet 2 and is extended to become ternary in couplet 3: here the  $4_4$  durations are transferred from the upper voice (bars 12-13) to the bass (six units beginning at bar 14), and the upper voice takes over the preceding  $4_2$  structure (3 units).<sup>35</sup> Above this complexity, couplet 3 maintains the normative 6-bar durational span of couplets 1 and 2, and this reveals that the 'syntax' of equal durations essential in Ruwet functions like poetic metre. Couplet 4 closes the Prelude by bringing the two voices into a single durational structure ( $4_4$ ): its four units, divided as 1+3, 'rhyme' with the dis-symmetry of couplet 1 (2+2+2+1) as Ruwet notes, but also draws in the extension of binary to ternary of couplet 3 and as a complete unit restores the quadratic form of the opening units (bars 1-4, 8-11). Thus the durational structure of couplet 4 is syntactically cadential.

The systematic plasticity of this durational schema is largely the cause of the sense of expansion and contraction in the piece and of its rhythmic subtlety: the different metrical units of the voices create a mobile and constant ambiguity for the whole that works to avoid definitive statement. This, I think, exemplifies Mallarméan dissemination — not, in this case, of phonemes, but of rhythm, one of the qualities of the word to be exploited musically by Mallarmé (§7.4) — and the 'expertly well-ordered disorder' recommended by Moréas (§8.1), disposed here for maximum fluidity within the confines of a strict, poetically-derived syntactic scheme.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> The top voice arabesque in bars 16-19 is rhythmically unaccentuated, but it does form a third durational 'voice' in  $4_4$  with first- and third-beat emphasis, not shown in Ex. 13.

<sup>36</sup> The durational structure described in Ex. 13 is a subtle instance of the procedure that Derrick Puffett has called 'the ostinato machine'. Insofar as Symbolist poetry can be understood as 'polyphonic' (Lacan's term), my analysis may contribute to an understanding of the origins of the Debussian ostinato.

**8.9** The analysis of the second half of the Prelude (Ex. 14) comprises a single paradigm of complex transformations broadly divided in two over the bass Bb (bars 12-17) and A (bars 18-20). This reference to the bass clarifies and establishes the metonymic transformations in the melodic structure. Unit 2 is analysed as a complex transformation of unit 1 (b. 13): here the function of the repetition in bars 14-15 is revealed as an expansion of b. 13, explaining the elaborative function of the C#-Bb in b. 14 and its transformation by inversion in b. 15 of the G-Bb of unit 1. Inversion, the primary process evident in units 1-10, inaugurates the process begun in unit 3 (b. 16) — the Ab-F inversion of the G-Bb of b. 13 — which ends in unit 10. This inversion of the inversion (as I prefer to describe it) produces a transposition of the initial G-Bb and is structurally significant because the underlying bass Bb allows unit 9 to function as a melodic cadence, returning the melodic rising third to its original shape (of b. 13) before the bass A in b. 18. Unit 9 indicates a return to stasis, so that the subsection defined by units 3-10 is bounded by the minor third: this confirms Ruwet's view that these two bars (16-17) are a single large unit, but it can now be seen that the positional contiguity of the units (fundamental to metonymy) also demands their similarity by inversion, transposition or interval expansion.

Units 11-18 (bars 18-20), on the other hand, begin a new phase of development expanding the minor third of unit 2 to a major third (E-C) and play on the alternative transformations of units 5 and 7: unit 11 transforms 7, and unit 13 transforms 5. However, unit 13 returns to the pitch level of the neighbour-note figure of 1, as does 17: thus, the gradual return to the origin is revealed to occur earlier than shown in Ex. 14 (at b. 21, the return to D). Expansion, the primary process in bars 18-23, re-emerges in units 19-21 with a tonal function: the descending triad, originating in unit 12, unites the dominant and tonic functions of the bass A-D, while the augmented triad in unit 21 (over Bb) is transitional to the first scene of the opera. In summary, then, the metonymic processes of the second section (bars 12-23) fall into two determining categories: inversion in units 1-10, interval expansion in units 11-21. While both are variation



processes, the second is the more radically transformational and less prone to analytical reduction. This, I think, reveals the emergence of the metaphoric from the metonymic: interval expansion is structurally innovative, whereas inversion gives greater weight to identity, and thus to structural contiguity (in Metz's sense of contiguity as 'conceptual').

**8.10** The analyses in Exs 11, 12 and 14 clearly reveal the pervasiveness of metonymy, as the surface correspondence, by inversion, of complete units, or as various forms of the part-whole relation. (Although the latter is, strictly speaking, the figure of synecdoche, it is metonymic when transpositions are involved.) Essentially, the analysis demonstrates the truth of Lacan's conception: everything in the melodic structure of the Prelude tends towards the metonymic since positional and 'semantic', or structural contiguity converge. Thus, it is now clear that the 'semantic' level is revealed by contiguity within the paradigm: in other words, equivalent terms are 'semantically' contiguous in the structure.

Metonymy dominates the analysis because Debussy's melodic structures are typically self-reflexive: even when clear oppositions are present in the Prelude, the possibility exists of an analysis containing only transformations of the initial material. This stylistic fingerprint points to Debussy's particular mode of 'free play' in melodic structure which is captured only partially by the more familiar term 'arabesque': melodic units develop both progressively and retrogressively, supported or contradicted by harmonic processes, as musical analogues to the potentially limitless *correspondances* of Symbolism. The strategies of De Man's analysis of rhetorical structure in Proust therefore present a stylistically congruent model for similar structures in Debussy. Genette's 'Metonymie chez Proust',<sup>37</sup> the catalyst for de Man's study, relies on the operation of memory as the prime mover of Proust's novelistic discourse which turns on the axes of metaphor and metonymy: 'without metaphor, Proust says, more or less, no true memories: we add [...] without metonymy, no linking of memories, no story, no novel'.<sup>38</sup> The trigger of memory is metaphor, but the expansion and exploration of a particular memory

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<sup>37</sup> Gérard Genette, 'Metonymie chez Proust', in *Figures III* (Paris: Seuil, 1972), pp. 41-63.

<sup>38</sup> Genette, *ibid.*, p. 63.

is metonymic, achieved by Proust's tendency toward 'assimilation by proximity', the projection of analogical affinity (metaphor) upon relationships of contiguity (metonymy).<sup>39</sup> If Genette's 'memory' is read as 'melodic opposition' a concise description of the twin axes of Debussy's musical discourse begins to emerge; add to this de Man's identification of 'logical tensions'<sup>40</sup> inherent in these rhetorical figures and the temptation to accept relation of musical units as inevitable can be firmly resisted: the point of the tropes is precisely that relations are produced accidentally but are presented as necessary. What is often regarded as unfathomable ambiguity in Debussy is produced by the tension of the accidental in the creation of tropes and the appearance, even illusion, of inevitability when they are elaborated by the analyst as 'structure'. The difficulty of discussing such free play is eased by the application of a more sophisticated inspection of the paradigmatic relations, although the paradigm remains the essential ground of the model.

However, my exploration of metaphor and metonymy in melodic structure scratches only the surface potential of the tropes. Reference to the role of the bass in defining the relations of melodic units opens up the question of harmonic organisation which exhibits similar discursive functions. As Ruwet's commentary to his analysis demonstrates, harmony variously confirms or challenges the organisation of melodic structure, and this suggests that there is a complex and mobile relation of congruence and opposition between the two parameters. Such opposition is *de facto* the most productive relation, involving tension between 'vertical' (inter-parametrical) rather than 'horizontal' (intra-parametrical) terms. Melody and harmony are not necessarily homogeneous in the Prelude: both dimensions are systematic and contain models and structural routines. It seems reasonable to suppose, then, that complexity and ambiguity are created by inter-parametrical discontinuity, mirroring the clear intra-parametrical melodic oppositions analysed by Ruwet (see Ex. 12).

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<sup>39</sup> See Genette, *ibid.*, pp. 59-61.

<sup>40</sup> de Man, *Allegories*, p. 7.

**8.11** An inter-parametrical analysis requires a more detailed understanding of the structure of the tropes. Ricoeur designates synecdoche as the primary trope,<sup>41</sup> and it is also the simplest: part/whole, whole/part, species/genus, and genus/species. A classic example is 'sail' for 'ship' (part/whole, as used by Maeterlinck in *Pelléas*, Act 1, scene 3; §4.1). In music this is easily translated to the decomposition of unit-segments, for example, bars 2, 4, 9, 11, 12 (G-A movement). Of these, only the relation between b. 12 and any of the preceding significantly transcends the repetition function, because it alone involves a change of context (melodic position and harmonic structure). This fulfils the elementary condition of language-rhetoric, that a trope should produce some minimal novelty within the change of context. Thus, what was classified as 'varied repetition' (§6.8) can now be described functionally as synecdoche. Harmonically, too, the same relation is present since both bars 2 and 12 present different forms of set 4-26\*I (Ex. 15).

Synecdoche is therefore not a powerful trope, but it constitutes the ground of metonymy and metaphor. Firstly, synecdoche depends on contiguity in the syntagm, as does metonymy. Both exhibit

substitution by syntagmatic contiguity [which is] based on the fact that, given a ready-made syntagm, established habits will permit one of its elements to be substituted for the other.<sup>42</sup>

In the music-trope though, the syntagm will rarely be 'ready made' (except for the system of functional harmony, and imitative forms). Thus, the relation of units will be established either by the repetition of the unit complex, and the ready-made syntagm will have to be located in a model (that is, the relation of units will have to be interpreted). Secondly, as Eco remarks, if both synecdoche and metonymy are understood as substitutions, traditional rhetoric has never satisfactorily explained the distinction between them.<sup>43</sup> Metonymy in Eco's definition covers all types of substitution except synecdoche

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<sup>41</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-disciplinary Studies in the Creation of Meaning in Language*, trans. Robert Czerny, et al. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), p. 163.

<sup>42</sup> Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p. 280. Example of an established syntagm: The President of the United States officially lives in the White House. Thus The White House can be used as a metonymy for The President of the United States.

<sup>43</sup> Umberto Eco, *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language* (London: Macmillan, 1984), p. 116.

(see examples above): object/purpose, container/contained, cause/effect, material/object, etc. The distinction (and therefore the connection of the two figures) can be preserved for the music trope if Richards's 'tension' is observed to increase in metonymy: 'Crown' for 'King' (object/purpose) is a more striking figure than 'crown' for 'monarchy' (a synecdoche, genus/species), because the relation is more contingent, habitual and culturally determined. Similarly, in the music-trope, signification will depend on arbitrary relations. In the *Prelude*, the relation of bars 2, 4, and 12 (considered in their totality, as a package of variables) is metonymic: the two common features (synecdoches), G-A and set 4-26\*I, are *connected* by the D-C-Bb progression in the bass that defines the ready-made syntagm (the model), but these elements function quite differently in the two contexts (Ex. 15). Thus, the principle of recontextualisation is essential, and this will stand as the primary distinction between synecdoche and metonymy. Synecdoche will therefore be confined to equivalent contexts only, with the proviso that identical repetition fails to create a trope: there is no tropic signification inherent in identity.

**8.12** Metaphor, unlike metonymy, does not depend on syntagmatic contiguity but selects from a paradigm of potentially equivalent elements which ranges from asemy at one end (total identification) and catachresis at the other (no discernible relation, 'wrong word'). The two terms of a metaphor may be connected in a syntagm: 'this woman is like a swan' creates a simile of which metaphor is an abbreviation. Ricoeur remarks that simile contains 'the marker of their partial identity',<sup>44</sup> the 'is like' construction. But this does not constitute an analysis of metaphor because no interpretation is involved. It is therefore primarily a difference of form, less powerful than metaphor because both terms are present (the trope is therefore said to be *in praesentia*). Simile, however, is not equivalent to Metz's metaphor 'presented syntagmatically' (although it falls within this class) because the syntagmatic metaphor in music and film juxtaposes rather than stating similarity: in music, there may be no counterpart to the 'is like' construction in language.

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<sup>44</sup> Ricoeur, *Rule*, p. 164.

Ricoeur explains the structure of metaphor itself as 'the product of two synecdoches'<sup>45</sup> by addition and suppression: in our example, swan/woman, the first synecdoche is 'long white neck' added to *woman* by the metaphor; the other is 'bird' which is suppressed in the trope. To this must be added that in metaphor the conceptual distance between the two terms is marked: in general, the smaller the distance the less effective the metaphor.<sup>46</sup> The relation between the terms therefore has the appearance of being highly arbitrary until the trope is formed: signification occurs when the underlying synecdoches are recognised. Bearing in mind that the most forceful music tropes in Debussy are *in praesentia*, a literal mapping of Ricoeur's model onto Debussy's tropes produces the following result: the principle of synecdoche-suppression is a constant of all non-identical relations, while the addition of a synecdoche is preserved. The relation between bars 4 and 5, for example, is metaphorical, with two synecdoches by addition: C natural, the only common tone; and the neighbour note, G-A (b. 4) becoming D-E (b. 5). The latter is split into two 'modes': the neighbour-note figure is common to both, but is transposed in b. 5 and its harmonic function is altered (the E is unequivocally inessential, whereas in b. 4 the ornamental/structural function of both G and A is ambiguous). Furthermore, since the D-E (b. 5) emphasises the second beat, a feature introduced in b. 3 (D-A-A) and added to the melodic profile of b. 4, the unit relation extends from b. 3 through b. 4 to b. 5 (beats 1 and 2) (see Ex. 12 above). And beneath the oppositional relation of bars 4 and 5, its expression of discontinuity, there lies an inversionally symmetrical (and therefore overdetermined) voiceleading progression D-E-Ab (top), D-C-Ab (bass), which provides a continuous substructure connecting the discontinuities on the surface, the progression from 4-26\*I to 4-25\*I (pentatonic to whole tone). The two units are therefore harmonically opposed, linearly connected, and melodically similar, and form a complex

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<sup>45</sup> Ricoeur, *ibid.*, p. 163.

<sup>46</sup> Except in the case of 'dead' metaphor, for example 'the mouth of the river', where the tension has become slack through habit and familiarity.

of similarity-within-difference that exemplifies the movement of *correspondance* — the transfer of the properties of one dimension to another.<sup>47</sup>

**8.13** Theoretical correspondences with these relational complexes appear in Paul de Man's discussion of rhetoric in Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu*, in which de Man finally concludes that Proust's typical strategy is to collapse the aspect of 'necessity' in metaphor ('the inference of identity and totality'<sup>48</sup> inherent in resemblance) into contiguous, metonymic relations of 'chance' — a contingent, purely relational contact of terms. Thus

the inference of identity and totality that is constitutive of metaphor is lacking in the purely relational metonymic contact: an element of truth is involved in taking Achilles for a lion [metaphor], but none in taking Mr. Ford for a motor car [metonymy].<sup>49</sup>

Through repetition and recontextualisation across units of discourse metonymy controls metaphor: metaphors masquerade deceptively as 'figures of necessity', when in fact they are also 'figures of chance' (metonymies).<sup>50</sup> *Prima facie*, however, metonymy might seem to embody a 'necessary' relation since, like synecdoche, it draws on the inherent properties of the signified, while, as discussed above, metaphor brings into relation two terms that are conceptually distant. The origin of this descriptive disparity lies in the fact that de Man approaches the tropes from the point of view of narrative units, not simply morphemes (specifically noun relations): the application of the tropes is itself tropic, a structural allegory.

De Man, I think, attempts three things:

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<sup>47</sup> Scott comments that 'metaphor must be a central element in any aesthetic of speed': by extension, this may be emphasised in any artistic genre, such as music, in which motion is primary. 'Metaphor is one perception overtaking another, a state of affairs that language is powerless to convey except by indirect means'. Clive Scott, 'The prose poem and free verse', in Bradbury and McFarlane (eds), *Modernism*, p. 356.

<sup>48</sup> de Man, *Allegories*, p. 14.

<sup>49</sup> de Man, *ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>50</sup> de Man, *ibid.*, p. 67.

a) to reiterate that there is nothing *inherently* necessary about any rhetorical figure: the signified is always available to be stated explicitly, and the decision to draw on a shared property (as in Ricoeur's 'synecdoche') is a creative one. In music, one could say that unvaried repetition is always available, but as in language, this type of continuity is semiotically empty (literal, so to speak) and does not lead to signification, narrative, or form creation.

b) to assert that there is nothing 'accidental' about metaphor. Assuming that the desire to trope is a creative desire, the relation of disparate terms (oppositions) in metaphor is essential and necessary, since only when this move is made does the spark of creative signification occur.

c) to extend the traditional description of metonymy as merely a more forceful form of synecdoche. Essentially de Man conceives metonymy as the product of *temporal* association which seems to balance neatly the notion of metaphor as the association of *conceptually* distant terms. This allows the tropes to function narratively, and brings out the 'musical' organisation of Proustian narrative in which metonymic relations established by proximity in time become metaphoric once contiguous relation retreats: the conceptual distance between the terms is then revealed, leaving the unforeseen, creative relation that we call metaphor.

To exemplify de Man's tropic reading of Proust's novel, Gray traces the construction of a metaphor from metonymy in the association of algebra lessons and 'enigmatic sexuality' effected by the temporal proximity of Marcel's algebra class and the suspicion that he may be visiting a brothel.<sup>51</sup> The relational, metonymic contact of the two activities is established through the repetition of this unit-sequence, and gradually comes to signify 'hidden' (illicit or enigmatic) sexuality until it can be applied to the sexually enigmatic (and ambiguous) Albertine whose letters and personality are described respectively as 'algebra' and 'algebraic'. This progression from a 'chance' metonymic relation to a 'necessary' metaphoric one is quite schematic. At first the two terms are

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<sup>51</sup> Margaret E. Gray, *Postmodern Proust* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992), pp. 76-86. Her reading highlights the trope's main constructive stages and various manifestations, but fails to do justice to its subtlety, something which I have attempted to restore in my gloss on her interpretation (see also note 52).

presented together syntagmatically, and when (on one occasion) Marcel does attend a brothel rather than <sup>an</sup> algebra class the signifier ('algebra') is displaced by another signifier ('brothel going') so that algebra takes on the signified 'covert activity' and becomes sexualised. Thereafter the signified (sexuality) is suppressed, so that 'algebra' becomes its metaphor.<sup>52</sup> This schematic presentation resembles musical structure in two ways: it defines and connects dispersed ideas (associations) in the work, and the meaning of the metaphor, its referential field is first established *in and by* the narrative, and does not draw on a common stock of potential equivalences. In other words, the trope is formed *in praesentia*, before it can appear *in absentia*, as if it were a special, narratological, case of simile. However, it is important to note that the trope is constructed not simply by an event-sequence but in the mind of Charlus who makes the initial connection and soon begins to associate Marcel's 'algebra' with his suspicion of unexplained erotic activity. Furthermore, the trope takes on an existence independent of the characters, and 'algebra' becomes a free-floating signifier, when it migrates from Charlus's contemplation of Marcel's activities to Marcel's own contemplation of Albertine's personality.

This reading reveals how in de Man's reading of Proust metonymy masquerades as metaphor. The necessity inherent in metaphor is fundamentally contingent, built on chance associations. What de Man is getting at here is what he calls the 'grammatization' of rhetoric, the way in which figurative effects within narrative (Albertine described as 'algebraic', for example) imply 'identity or totality'<sup>53</sup> through the force of their apparently imaginative power, but are in fact temporally structural. Metaphors arise from an event-structure, the narrative units consolidated in memory as habit. In other words, the origin of metaphor in the plot gives rise to a narratology,<sup>54</sup> a tropic structure that informs and controls part of the discourse. In Proust, the construction of metaphor, if not its invention, is inscribed in the discourse: and the evolution of this structure is a

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<sup>52</sup> Proust's trope can be read as a metaphor about metaphor. Neither Gray nor de Man observe that the content of this trope illustrates the metaphoric process itself, the suppression of a term whose effects are then dispersed through the discourse, like the 'covert' or ambiguous sexuality signified here.

<sup>53</sup> de Man, *Allegories*, p. 14.

<sup>54</sup> See Lawrence Kramer, *Classical Music and Postmodern Knowledge* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), p. 98-121.



narratological structure. De Man understands grammar to be both 'semi-automatic' and a 'programmed pattern',<sup>55</sup> which, we might infer, is another dimension of necessity. On the contrary: grammar is allied specifically with metonymy (chance). What he means, therefore, is that metonymy, although dependent on contiguity, resembles grammar in that the pattern is programmed in memory by repeated association. Thus, he writes,

by passing from a paradigmatic structure based on substitution, such as metaphor, to a syntagmatic structure based on contingent association such as metonymy, the mechanical, repetitive aspect of grammatical forms is shown to be operative [...]. Figures [i.e., metaphor] are assumed to be inventions, the products of a highly particularized individual talent, whereas no one can claim credit for the programmed pattern of grammar.<sup>56</sup>

**8.14** The extent to which Proustian narrative figuration can work in musical structure is demonstrated by the opening of Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde* (which also plays a role in Debussy's *Prelude*). The 'Tristan' progression (Tprog) (Ex. 16) comprises the 'Tristan' chord (T) and its resolution (Tres) prolonged by two chords created by the passing notes A and A# (Ex. 16a). In this opening, T evokes Tres by proximity, the expectation of resolution it contains (a unique musical correspondence unavailable to the linguistic signifier), and the common tones G# and B distributed as a voice exchange (Ex. 16b). These are the metonymic relations. The two chords also resemble one another: as Robin Holloway and others have noted,<sup>57</sup> T is a half-diminished 7th, and Tres is a 'dominant' seventh — a metaphorical connection (presented syntagmatically) by means of the similarity of 7th-chords as a class. This significance of this is synecdochic. That is to say, the 'background' similarity of the chords mimics the function of synecdoche in the language-metaphor; and like the examples given above, it also reproduces the structure of 'suppressed' synecdoche, since Tres is actually a 7th chord (just as in the metaphor 'swan' for woman, only the swan has a swan's elegance and long white neck).

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<sup>55</sup> de Man, *Allegories*, p. 16.

<sup>56</sup> de Man, *ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

<sup>57</sup> Holloway, *Debussy and Wagner*, p. 124, Ex. 23.

In a non-Wagnerian context, the figural structure of Tprog can be liberated, exploited, and elaborated: in *Pelléas*, for example, pairs of 7ths often reproduce the pitch-class content of Tprog (a feature that Holloway considers to be a reduction or leeching-away of significance in their Debussian context).<sup>58</sup> Since this chord association occurs autonomously (although not necessarily independently of tonal function) the structure of Tprog. can be examined for its self-referential p-c content:<sup>59</sup> this also allows the relations of the chords to be made more explicit. T and Tres are inversionally related as pc sets 4-27 [3, 5, 8, 11] and 4-27B [8, 11, 2, 4], holding [8, 11] invariant with the remaining dyads [3, 5] and [2, 4] constant at t11. The moving dyads are further associated by the harmonic interval progression 7-7 (Ex. 16b). Metaphorical structure is therefore expressed through similarity (common-tone synecdoche, interval progression, set  $\{ \begin{smallmatrix} 3 & 5 \\ 8 & 11 \end{smallmatrix} \}$ ), while difference is maintained by inversion and the chord's registral disposition (as ordered sets). The passing chords separating T and Tres are both expressions of 4-25\*I [3, 5, 9, 11] and [2, 4, 8, 10] at t11, and according to the scheme outlined above exemplify positional similarity only: as different expressions of the same set they are paradigmatically equivalent but have no inherent figural relation. However, these two chords taken either as a unit participate in a potential figural movement. Their total content, 8-9\*I, is identical to that of the whole of Tprog [2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11]: thus the passing-chord unit contains the p-c content of the whole, a feature developed by Debussy as the metonymic 'embedded complement' (that is, according to one classic definition of metonymy, container for contained).<sup>60</sup> In association with T or Tres, the two 4-25\*Is yield 5-28B [3, 5, 8, 9, 11] and 5-28 [8, 10, 11, 2, 4], another inversionally-related pair now spanning the whole harmonic progression (Tprog) as metonymy (through proximity: the sets are contiguous) and metaphor (their semantic similarity is 'formalised' as both p-c set inversion, and the syntagmatic inversion of their subsets: in succession, 4-27/4-25\*I: 4-25\*I/4-27). In addition, in 5-28B/5-28 [8, 11] are of course invariant (the remainders

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<sup>58</sup> Holloway, *ibid.*, pp. 124-5.

<sup>59</sup> This is also analysed in a rather different context by Allen Forte, 'New approaches to the linear analysis of music', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, Vol. 41, No. 2 (1988), pp. 315-48.

<sup>60</sup> On embedded complement, see Richard S. Parks, *The Music of Claude Debussy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), p. 132-60, *passim*.

[3, 5, 9] and [10, 2, 4] express the inversion relation as the whole-tone sets 3-8 and 3-8B at t6). Finally, all these relations articulate the structure of mirror sets and inversionally-related pairs, a type of reciprocity perhaps only supplementary in Wagner but exploited routinely by Debussy, as if instinctively drawn to the self-referential.

**8.15** Although mirror-forms do not in themselves announce a predilection for figural structure (in my extended sense of the term), they demonstrate the autonomous reference of the signifiers, and ground the figurative process. The Prelude is replete with mirror forms, particularly in relation to Mélisande. The complete neighbour-note substructure of her character theme (Ab-Bb-Ab) inverts that of the Destiny theme (A-G-A), and thus metonymises Golaud's theme (D-E, then G-A) which itself is presented as a synecdoche of Destiny. As a discrete unit (bs 14-19), Mélisande's melodic material is constructed as a series of mirrors: her theme (b. 14), set 3-7 [8, 10, 1], is mirrored in transposed ordered form at the beginning of the desire theme (b. 16), set 3-7 [3, 5, 8] (see Ex. 17), so that she is therefore both the object of desire and embodies it musically. And as her theme unfolds into the arabesque of the desire theme, mirror forms rise to the surface in the two expressions of set 4-27 (bs 16-17) pivoting on the high initial Ab, after which the mirror again recedes beneath the surface: the transposition of 4-27 in b. 18 is mirrored by its inversion, 4-27B (b. 19). Thus, 'mirror' as a structural relation is manifested in the set structure by inversion relations, and in melodic structure by inversion and contrary motion.

**8.15a** Ex. 17 is a synoptic graph on four levels (A-D). Level A displays a voiceleading reduction of the Prelude together with its pc set structure: the piece is segmented into discursive units defined by the scalar and harmonic association of the dominant sets (diatonic, pentatonic, Tprog, whole-tone). This owes something to Forte's theory of pc set genera,<sup>61</sup> but Forte's system of operations is not used here since the definition and

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<sup>61</sup> Allen Forte, 'Pitch-class set genera and the origin of modern harmonic species', *Journal of Music Theory*, Vol. 32 (1988), pp. 187-270.

interaction of the generic classes is to be captured by my application of the tropes. The layout of level *A*, its supplementary annotations and commentary are intended to convey fully the generic relations while avoiding the deadening-through-abstraction characteristic of taxonomic methods in general. The methods are used here as tools in a broadly deconstructive enterprise: it should not be assumed that they imply incompatible systems of organisation (this is not a comparative analysis), nor that they control the interpretation (I reject *le marteau sans maître*). On the other hand, the systems of which the tools are manifestations are not entirely rejected either because, as it seems to me, Debussy does not reject them. Level *B* is a 'continuity graph' which summarises the analyses of level *A* and reveals the emergence of a harmonic model (this virtue of abstraction cannot be resisted), and levels *C* and *D* continue the process of reduction by means of common tones. These latter levels stand in place of a background by capturing pitch contiguity (level *C*) from which Rameau's principle of *liaison* emerges as a large-scale structural determinant.<sup>62</sup>

**8.15b** Debussy's preference for mirror forms is also evident in the strategic contrary-motion top and bass voices at the cadence (bs 20-22), and in the prevalence of mirror sets (for example 4-26\*I).<sup>63</sup> These features are not symbolically charged in isolation (they are stylistically neutral), but they become significant in specific contexts — when, for example, it is observed that the entire second section of the Prelude is dominated by melodic mirrors, but the first section is not. However, in a mirror there is something mirrored: Ex. 17, level *C* shows that section 2 is the mirror image of the voice-leading mirror (D-C-Ab, and D,-E-Ab) in the lower parts of bars 1-7, since the larger line (Ab [b. 14], E [b. 18], D [b. 21], defined by unit-beginnings and register) retrogrades and inverts the two parts in the opening statement — features that support Langham Smith's reading of the Prelude as a symbolic 'circularity'.

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<sup>62</sup> Levels *C* and *D* have an implicit relation to William Benjamin's 'pitch-class counterpoint'. See William Benjamin, 'Pitch-class counterpoint in tonal music', in Richmond Browne (ed.), *Music Theory: Special Topics* (New York: Academic Press, 1981), pp. 1-32.

<sup>63</sup> As indicated in Solomon's set names: all sets suffixed \*I are mirrors in the sense that they contain their own inversion without producing a distinct inverted form. See Solomon, 'The list of chords', *passim*.

Against this background, the function of 4-27/27B can be clarified. In the melodic line, the mirror form of the first 4-27 (bars 16-17) is an enclosed form: as the opera unfolds, this feature comes to symbolise Mélisande's character, her unchanging personality. The 4-27 mirror is also a representation of Mélisande's hair, an association that gains the strength of a symbolic reference when she appears on stage and when her hair becomes the focus of Pelléas's physical attraction to her: it is the physical symbol of desire, but it also binds him to her (see Act 3, scene 1) and encloses the pair in an exclusive relation. Thus, the mirror form of 4-27 expresses both Mélisande's static closedness of character and the reciprocity of desire in a framed structure that excludes others. Such a complex of symbols is Proustian: only when the conjunction of set, mirror form, character traits, physical features, and love relation is effected do all dimensions of the symbol become apparent; and because these are presented to us 'accidentally' (although they are of course designed), their repeated co-incidence charges the desire theme (the musical dimension of the symbolic complex) as the vehicle of 'necessary', and therefore metaphorical, relations in the symbol.<sup>64</sup>

It is, however, no accident that T (4-27) and Tres (4-27B) are first stated explicitly in the desire theme. The arabesque in bars 16-17 expresses T at pitch, transformed as melody, and this is the first irruption of Wagner as a symbolic force in the opera. Debussy's 4-27 is a metaphor of T (it is both T and not-T), a relation that signals Debussy's early-modernist play with Maeterlinck's *Pelléas* as a trope, an allegory, of Wagner's *Tristan* (the classic parallel is Joyce's *Ulysses* and Homer's *Odyssey*), and this stands as an example of a radicalised vertical correspondence (§4.2) which attains transcendence not by reference to an eternal, pre-existent design but to a cultural construct that has come to determine any metaphysical operatic love-relation. Furthermore, since 4-27B (bars 18-19) does not reproduce the content of Tres, it is clear that Debussy tropes not only T but Tprog (which itself is tropically formed; §8.14) as follows. 4-27/27B in bars 18-19 occurs as a chord pair animating 5-34\*I (V<sup>9</sup>), holding three pcs invariant,

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<sup>64</sup> There is also a striking parallel with Proust's 'algebra' as a metaphor for sexual activity: Debussy's exploitation of set and contrapuntal forms is 'algebraic' in relation to their referent, desire.

[6,9,0], with the 9th resolving to the root D (Ex. 18). This enclosed, non-progressive animating movement within a chord is typical in Debussy, but the closure of Debussy's progression functions here to delineate distinctly the harmonic area of 4-27B: thus, both 4-27 and 4-27B are closed. The resultant chord succession in bars 16-19 is 4-27 [3,5,8,11], 4-27B [6,9,2,0]. Within the latter (bars 18-19), the single and clearest example of metaphor presented paradigmatically arises in the oppositional counterpointing of the desire theme and Golaud's theme, a conjunction that announces the first love-relation of the opera. A new meaning occurs here (as it must in metaphor): since the resolution of T is Tres and *Tristan* ends in a *Liebestod*, the conjunction of Mélisande (as desire) and Golaud in 4-27B differentiates them from Destiny and forces the relationship to be established on the same ground. This halts the infinite semiosis of metonymy and brings into being the narrative impulse, an 'event' which allows the work to progress. 'Meaning' here is therefore a narrative concept around which other, metonymic events cluster.

However, Debussy's troping of Tprog achieves the separation of T and Tres from their function in an infamous harmonic progression, since although the chords are reproduced by Debussy, their harmonic progression and superset (8-9\*I) in *Tristan* are not. Closure, as Deleuze and Guattari emphasise (§5.3), opens the possibility of a new relation exploited later in *Pelléas* as the ability for either chord to exist alone or to be prolonged and associated at a distance, and this isolation of T and Tres from their Wagnerian harmonic structure increases their difference and liberates their tropic potential. In the Prelude itself, Debussy opposes the two sets through the tension maintained by absolute difference in pc content (there are no common tones), but establishes a new relational structure for them (one that complements the similarity relations established by melodic variation within the arabesque and identity of set class). The union of 4-27 and 4-27B is the octatonic set 8-28 [2,3,5,6,8,9,10,11] signalled by its embedded complement, 4-28\*I [5,8,11,2], the initial set of b. 16. In addition to this announcement, since 8-28\*I appears nowhere else in the Prelude<sup>65</sup> and is segmented by

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<sup>65</sup> All other potential supersets arising in bars 16-19 are relationally insignificant in the piece.

inversions (that is, mirrors) of 4-27, it carries the weight of isolating and defining the harmonic field in which a musical symbol, the desire theme, can unfold.

The other sets arising in these bars, 5-31B, 5-29B, and 6-Z29B are insignificant for harmonic continuity,<sup>66</sup> and arise in conjunction with the bass Bb (excluded from the 8-28\*I): the insignificance of the sets suggests that Debussy's structuring assumes a foreign, and rhetorically-significant role for Bb, since without it the passage is fully controlled by 'Tristan' and octatonic sets. Bb appears first with Golaud's theme in bars 12-13 and is then sustained through the *Mélisande* and desire music: it is, I think, nothing less than the sign of Golaud as Other, foreign to *Mélisande* but producing the tension from which desire springs (in bars 16-17). When Bb resolves to A (b. 18), desire is fulfilled by its becoming-one with its object (4-27 [0,4,6,9] contains the bass A). The harmonic tension of bars 16-17 is, so to speak, a sexual tension which both grounds (since Bb is the bass) and adds to the tension within the metaphorical animation of 8-28\*I, the definitive set of the desire music.

**8.16** A Proustian association of narrative units within the Prelude exists on two planes: the projection of relations within one set type, and the relation of contiguous units. Both planes exhibit metonymic and metaphorical operations (Ex. 17, level A). The first tropic projection relates all diatonic, pentatonic, 'Tristan' and whole-tone units within these distinct set types (the primary relation of the units is of course the set type itself). Each of the three diatonic units (bars 1-4, 8-11, 21-2) is bounded by a triad (3-11 or 3-11B), the predominant set type for the unit. In succession, each unit tropes its predecessor as a metonymic expansion 'from within', and this gives rise to a progression of total-content supersets, 5-35\*I [0,2,4,7], 6-32\*I [0,2,4,7,9], 7-35\*I [11,0,2,4,5,7,9]. This progression toward fullness (7-35\*I is the diatonic major scale) carries the expression of becoming in the Prelude as a metonymic chain: the diatonic world is created from the opening 5th (set

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<sup>66</sup> They can of course be related in a set complex, but the tendency of my analysis is to resist accounting for large numbers of sets in this way.

2-5\*I), becomes triadic then pentatonic (4-26\*I) in bars 1-4, and continues the drive to the completeness finally achieved at the cadence (bars 21-22).<sup>67</sup>

The two pentatonic units (bars 12-13, 20) defined by 4-26\*I are clearly related metonymically. Both units are closed (by the triad in bar 13, and by the double expression, linearly and vertically, of 6-Z26 in bar 20) and they share set 6-32\*I, the total content of bar 12-13, restated in the first two chords of bar 20. Furthermore, both units contain Golaud's theme and are transitional in context: the first from Destiny to Mélisande, the second from desire (Mélisande) to Destiny. So clear is this tropic relation that it can be seen to exclude Mélisande's music altogether, music which can appear to be an insertion into the pentatonic continuity disrupted and disseminated in the temporal structure by the foreign material. A small-form diatonic model for the Prelude could therefore contain only the diatonic and pentatonic units (bars 1-4, 8-13, 20, 21-22): but it is also clear that without the non-diatonic material the piece would be impoverished and could hardly be called music. This, I think, is because to make the diatonic-pentatonic units contiguous would be to leach away their tropic potential. Temporal distance is essential here for the varied repetitions to acquire structural force, and thus the metonymic relation of the pentatonic units is created by this distance: metonymy, like that of the diatonic units, is presented syntagmatically and is grounded in 'conceptual' (that is, structural) contiguity, but not in de Man's temporal contiguity.

Unlike all other set types, the 'Tristan' units (bars 16-19; §8.15a, b), constituting metaphor, are contiguous and therefore structurally aberrant. Mélisande, as Maeterlinck's text makes clear, is the disruptive force in Allemonde: she inspires desire which transgresses boundaries and social institutions, and so her music in the Prelude is similarly transgressive of Debussy's structural norm of non-contiguity (if we recall that contiguity is primarily a Wagnerian trait for Debussy, then the presence of Wagner in the desire music is further instantiated). Golaud's music, on the other hand, is always bound up in a

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<sup>67</sup> As in all other units, the smaller sets arising in the diatonic music (4-20\*I, 4-23\*I, 4-22B) are harmonically inessential, but through repetition in other contexts acquire a structural role (§8.18).



dialectic with Destiny:<sup>68</sup> but the unit in bars 5-6, stating the whole-tone set type (4-25\*I) also has an obvious relation to Mélisande's set 4-25\*I (b. 14) which grounds the melodic metonymy of the two units. The metonymic pairing of the first appearances of Golaud and Mélisande in the Prelude becomes metaphor when the internal tension and opposition of their music emerges in bars 16-19 (when 'Golaud's' Bb becomes dissonant; §8.15). In the larger scale, the function of the whole-tone units (bars 5-6, 14-15, 23) is quite unlike that of the other set types since there is no progressive dissemination or projection through the structure: their tropic function is therefore almost exclusively created by opposition to their contiguous diatonic/pentatonic units, and because the whole-tone units oppose contiguously, they are powerful agents of discontinuity, difference and metaphor.

**8.17** Metaphor governs the first two units in Ex. 17, as demonstrated spatially by the layout of the analysis. Whole-tone units are the most distant from the diatonic, a structural premise that Debussy emphasises by grounding the first whole-tone unit (b. 5) in the tritone (Ab) relation to the tonic. (Because whole-tone units progress no further toward atonality in Debussy, once Mélisande's theme is stated in b. 14 the structure gravitates back to the diatonic field, through the 'Tristan' (chromatic) and pentatonic types.) If this opposition is so heavily marked, what are the dimensions of relation? Firstly, as we have seen (§8.11) the synecdoches (neighbour note, and common tone C); secondly, complete expressions of 5-35\*I and 6-35\*I, the pentatonic and whole tone scales (recall that such closure is necessary for the most forceful tropes to occur), which hold a common subset [0,2,4]. Thus, while Destiny and Golaud are presented in metaphorical opposition, the synecdochic links assert similarity by contiguity (common tones are most powerful in contiguity), a dimension of 'necessity' that supplements the Proustian metonymy of 'chance' proximity. This process is replayed in the Golaud-Mélisande relation (bars 5-6, 14-15). Destiny is not a discrete character like Golaud and Mélisande: when Golaud's theme is followed by the reprise of Destiny (bars 6-8), the

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<sup>68</sup> Ruwet's 'dialectic of the repeated and non-repeated' applies primarily to these two fields and not to Mélisande's music.

proximity of his set 4-25\*I and Destiny's 2-5\*I gives rise to the superset 5-28 [6,8,9,0,2]. Destiny-plus-Golaud is a trope for Mélisande since the total content of her first music (bars 14-15) is 5-28B [8,10,1,2,4], a relation which inverts 5-28 and holds [2,8] invariant — the D-A dyad, the sign of Destiny. This dramatic *correspondance* binds the three 'characters' together in a symbolic complex, instigated by opposition-as-metaphor in bars 1-7, but grounded and revealed to be controlled by metonymy and synecdoche.

Bars 1-7 are defined as a single trope by the 'cadence' in b. 7, the aporia of the sustained and isolated Ab, and this hiatus brackets the succession diatonic/pentatonic/whole-tone as a progression of set types (D, P, W-T) repeated and expanded in bars 8-15 (see Ex. 17, level B). Through this harmonic expansion, bars 8-15 emerge as a metonymy of bars 1-7 since every feature of the initial opposition (Destiny/Golaud) is now repeated and developed. The structural chords of b. 8 (3-11/11B) give rise to 4-26\*I [9,0,2,5], first stated in b. 2 as [4,7,9,0], a metonymy projected further when Golaud's theme in b. 12 defines the pentatonic set explicitly: 4-26\*I [2,5,7,10] is restated here holding Destiny's D minor triad [2,5,7] invariant. This metonymy is confirmed by the expansion of the total content of bars 8-11, 6-32\*I [0,2,4,5,7,9], in b. 12's 7-32\*I [1,2,4,5,7,9,10], holding invariant the crucial G-A neighbour note and the D-minor pentachord [2,4,5,7,9]. Thus, while b. 5 presents Golaud in opposition to Destiny, bars 12-13 trope this relation as Golaud's emergence, metonymically, from Destiny, on the ground of the tonic pentachord.

When Golaud's unit closes in b. 13 with the Bb triad (3-11B), the stage is set for opposition to Mélisande's theme (bars 14-15) in a metaphorical relation of harmonic opposition (pentatonic/whole-tone) and melodic-contrapuntal similarity (the common tones are [10,2]). Golaud and Mélisande are therefore also first presented in a relation of Otherness, a tension maintained in bars 16-17 when Golaud's Bb becomes a dissonant pedal beneath Mélisande's desire music. However, the alteration of Bb from consonance in bars 12-15 to dissonance in b. 16 is controlled by Debussy's predilection for embedded complements: the union of 5-28 (total content, bars 14-15) and 5-31B (b. 16) is 7-31B [8,10,11,1,2,4,5], a harmonic structure that also expresses nicely the metonymic relation

of Mélisande and desire. Since this complement also connects Mélisande's 4-25\*1 to the 4-27 of desire, a relation which originates in Tprog, the Wagnerian connection is individuated and concretised here as a constant in the succession of set types (whole-tone is routinely contiguous with 'Tristan' material).

**8.18** The tropic relations (Ex. 17. level A) are presented schematically in Fig. 8.1 below. In review, the model of set types in the first section of the Prelude (bars 1-15) {D, P, W-T} is stated in bars 1-7 and expanded in bars 8-15. This progression works independently of tonal function and is cyclical in the Prelude as a whole. In section 2 (bars 16-23) the progression is retrograded, and expanded by the 'Tristan' harmony: {W-T (bars 14-15), T (bars 16-19), P (b. 20), D (b. 21)} — after which the cadential unit restates the opening progression, {D (bars 21-22), W-T (b. 23), D (b. 24)}. While subject to expansion and variation by change of context, the prime form of this progression {D, P, T, W-T} as defined in the Prelude assumes the status of a rule,<sup>69</sup> as the ground of Debussy's harmonic practice in the whole of *Pelléas*, particularly in scenes where love relations are prominent.<sup>70</sup> As an ordered rotation of set types, the progression allows a systematic yet flexible individuation of the chromatic universe in relation to diatonic tonal centres, rarely composed out by Germanic means.

<sup>69</sup> In this respect, the progression is an extension of what James Hepokoski has called the 'formulaic opening' in Debussy. Hepokoski identifies the Prelude as, primarily, an example of the 'modal/chordal' opening, but it also exemplifies his 'introductory sequence/expansion' model. In my scheme of tropes the latter is of course classed as a tropic structure. See James A. Hepokoski, 'Formulaic openings in Debussy', *19th-Century Music*, Vol. 8 (1984), p. 48.

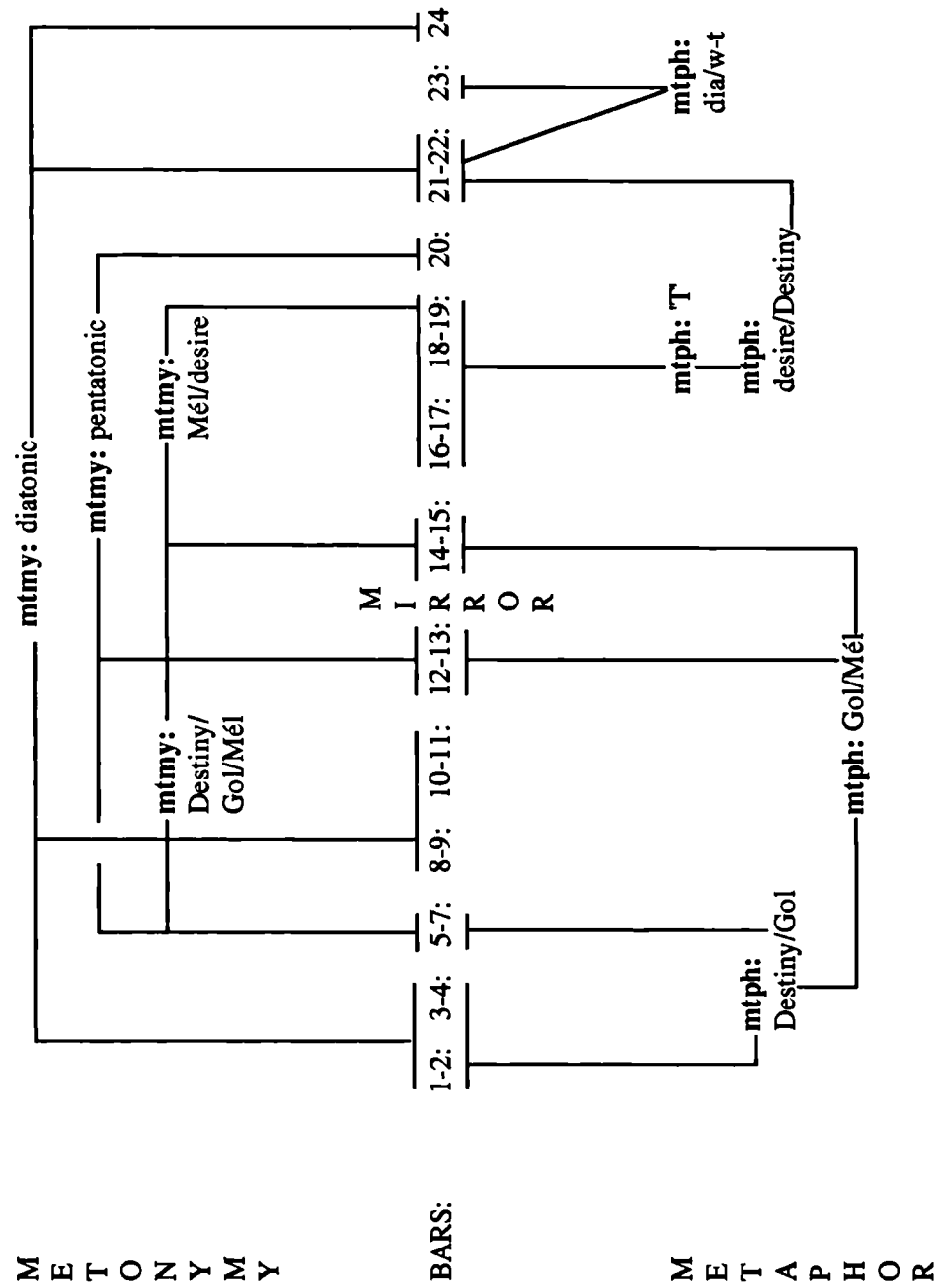
<sup>70</sup> Parks identifies such progressions as 'modulations and mutations' of four pc set genera (diatonic, 8-17/8-18/8-19, whole-tone, and chromatic), but he does not propose any particular ordering, nor that this ordering achieves the stability of a model. He does, however, map his four genera onto four generalised psychological states: benign/passive, malignant/active, malignant (active/passive), and neutral (Parks, *Debussy*, pp. 166-8). Although Parks is right to say that 'Debussy's choice of genus from moment to moment forges consistent connections between the pc set genera and the psychological implications of the characters and their actions' (p. 168), this tetrad seems to me so broad as to be interpretively worthless, and in many specific instances, wrong. When Parks states, for example, that the chromatic genus is 'neutral' this simple, catalytic symbolic function is inapplicable to Mélisande's chromatic desire theme which is in many respects the crux of the Prelude. There is also clearly something amiss with Parks's generic fields when this most obviously chromatic music cannot be so classified in Parks's list of genus members. 'Chromatic' has a very restricted meaning in this taxonomy, one that is produced partly by the need to group sets in large classes: my point is that, in a study of Debussy, a theory that classifies the 'Tristan' chord, 4-27/27B, as either 'diatonic' or 'octatonic' but not 'chromatic' is severely compromised by the blunt instrument of a scale typology formalised as a theory of genera, and that it requires the corrective of historical context.

The progression can also assume a symbolic role. In the Prelude, the progression's palindromic form symbolises, in section 1, the individuation of Golaud's pentatonicism from Destiny's diatonicism and then the encounter with the (whole-tone) Other, *Mélisande*: once this difference from the diatonic is established, the conjunction of Golaud and *Mélisande* leads inexorably, through desire's chromaticism (4-27/27B), back to Destiny's diatonicism (b. 21). And as this re-progression to Destiny gets underway, the diatonic is made to re-emerge from the desire theme in the ascending linear progression E-D of the top voice in bars 18-21 which expresses set 7-35\*I [6,7,9,11,0,2,4], the diatonic scale, stated harmonically and simultaneously in the total content of bars 20 and 21-22. Furthermore, 6-33, formed twice in the desire theme, is repeated in the first two chords of bars 21 and 22, so that the similarity relations of desire and Destiny are multiplied and ground a large-scale structure of metaphor (opposition is present in all parameters except the harmonic). Bar 20 therefore emerges as fully transitional in context: Golaud connects *Mélisande* and Destiny, a function indicated also by the contrary-motion mirror of the outer parts, so that *Mélisande*'s mirror forms are projected into Golaud's music. Congruent with its transitional role, b. 20 gathers to itself the transitional sets of earlier units: the 4-20\*I of b. 8 recurs in b. 20 as the harmonisation of the flattened leading note C, while the passing 4-22B (b. 20) is projected in a similarly inessential role in b. 21.<sup>71</sup> However, this latter 4-22B is also essential to the construction of 6-33 in b. 21, and thus to the symbolic connection of that set. The inessential in one dimension, then, can emerge as constitutive of larger tropic relations: that the 'inessential' 4-22B should have a role in the trope of desire exemplifies both the libidinal, the necessity of the accidental, and Mallarmé's dissemination of units that 'lose even a meaning' (except in relation to a primary correspondence of sound and sense: recall Mallarmé's *Or* and the dissemination of its phoneme; §6.8).

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<sup>71</sup> 4-Z29 (b. 20) is inessential in every respect.

Fig. 8.1 (summary of Ex. 17, level A)



**8.19** The analysis presented in level *A* uses metaphor and metonymy as devices for grasping the variety of relations produced by temporal and structural contiguity or opposition. The primary usefulness of the tropes is therefore to assess the weight of difference and similarity among the units. But this also entails a certain spatialisation of temporal contiguity, and atomisation of the narrative flow. Levels *B-D* (Ex. 17) are intended to restore the temporal to the analysis by revealing that, in effect, the continuities arise from Debussy's primary technique of dissociation (it does not seem to me that the discursive units are generated by this continuity, but that this prolongation and composing out are effects of placing the units in time).

The continuity graph (level *B*) restores the tonal function of the units. There are three progressions: I—V<sup>#5</sup><sub>2</sub>;

I—VI<sup>6</sup><sub>53</sub> -b<sup>9</sup><sub>b7</sub>—V<sup>#6</sup><sub>4</sub> -<sup>7</sup><sub>3</sub>—I;

I—VII—VI—I<sup>6</sup><sub>4</sub>.

None of the progressions can be diatonically functional (unless a Schoenbergian theory of alteration is applied), and thus tonal function is maintained by the linear bass motions from the tonic D: D-C-Ab; D-Bb-A; D-Bb-A-D. The harmonic function of the 'altered chord' progressions subordinates functional tonality to their set types and relations (grounded by the linear bass motions). The second progression (bars 8-21) is the longest and most internally complete; thus an introductory, perhaps inessential function is suggested for the first progression (bars 1-7), balanced by the cadential function of the third. There is certainly something significant in the first progression's termination in the aporia of Ab (b. 7). As we know, Ab defines extremity and otherness, but the chord it supports was, in 1903, the strongly implicative augmented 6th which as notated here would normally resolve to a dominant 7th on G as a cadential approach to C (VII).<sup>72</sup> This cadence, of course, does not occur in the Prelude, but it does foreshadow the first large-scale tonal movement in Act 1, scene 1, from D (fig. 3) to C (fig. 7).<sup>72a</sup> The Ab, as the sign of this cadential progression, expresses the primary *différance* in the Prelude's structure: the augmented 6th both differs from the cadence and defers it into the first

<sup>72</sup> This augmented 6th can also be read as a version of the 'Tristan' chord with G# as an appoggiatura to the following A natural. Such a reading would announce the presence of Wagner, harmonically, in bar 5, preceding the more focussed presence of *Tristan* in Melisande's music.

<sup>72a</sup> Durand orchestral score, pp. 5 and 8.

act of the opera. In a relational twist, however, the Ab also signifies a putative cadence that has already occurred, the opening progression of the piece, I-VII (bars 1, 2), so that the *différance* of Ab lies also in its failure to lead to the repetition of the small-scale progression on a larger plane within the Prelude itself.

A similar differential [*sic*] structure arises in b. 17 (Ex. 17, level *B*). When the closure of the desire arabesque (on the now fully disruptive Ab) defines 4-27 melodically and harmonically as (b)VI<sup>b9</sup><sub>b7</sub> (in conjunction with the bass Bb), this chord (in D minor) is functionally similar to b. 6's Ab (bVI in C). The implicative possibility in b. 17 is that a perfect cadence on Ab will follow, to resolve the tension accumulated over the bass Bb established in b. 12. Debussy's radical (re)solution here is to avoid realising Ab as a structural chord, even though a bass progression to Ab would produce a bass motion D-Bb-Ab entirely congruent with the whole-tone relation to the tonic in b. 8, and would compose out the tritone. Instead, the bass moves to A natural (V), inaugurating the return to the tonic to confirm the re-connection of the unit-tropes with the Destiny theme. The logic of the V<sup>b9</sup><sub>b7</sub>—V<sup>#6</sup><sub>4</sub> progression, as Debussy constructs it, lies in the contrary motion of outer parts that substantially guarantees the logic of Tprog, in which Wagner's bass moves F-E and the top voice A#-B. *Différance* therefore opens the domain of possibility in b. 17 since whole-tone bass progressions and tritone-related structural cadences are again delayed until Act 1, scene 1: but by deferring this possibility, Debussy brings into focus the troping of Tprog as 4-27/27B, and allows his distinctive octatonic control of it to arise. What is normatively implied here (Tprog) co-exists, as possibility, with an escape from norms, so that the innovative both creates a figural discourse with the traditional, and is figuratively constituted (by the internal relations of its terms).

**8.20** In summary, the multiplicity and mobility of relations among the units in level *A*, whether contiguous or projected in time, are grouped along the twin axes of metaphor and metonymy. The complexity and stratification of the relations forms a rhizomatic system in which dissemination, modelled on the 'musicality' of Symbolist poetry, is enfranchised as a structural play of associations in the service of symbolic 'logic'. With all

aspects of the structure playing freely and symbolically charged, relational syntax arises as the musical rhetoric of the tropes, the repetitions of these types of relation, and the repetition of temporal sequences. But beneath this metalinguistic, individuating syntax, a 'linguistic' syntax is necessary to ensure coherence. As Mallarmé asked of poetry, 'What fulcrum is there, I mean, for intelligibility in these contrasts? A guarantee is necessary — Syntax — '.<sup>73</sup>

Level *C* provides an elementary syntactical guarantee in the form of a global progression of common tones with *liaison*<sup>74</sup> as the principle of coherence. Debussy relies and capitalises on Rameau's syntactical category (which, in Rameau, supplements Fundamental Bass theory), reinstating, theoretically, the presence of the past. Tropically speaking, *liaison* demonstrates rather trivially the pervasive structure of synecdoche in the Prelude, but it is also a useful summary of this structure and indicated the economy of Debussy's syntactical control of opposition. None of the opposed units resist *liaison*: Destiny/Golaud (bars 1-7) retains C, and when D arises in b. 5 Golaud/Destiny (b. 8) retains this pitch; Golaud/Mélisande (bars 12-14) retains D-Bb; Mélisande/Golaud (bars 18-20) retains C-A; and Golaud/Destiny (bars 20-21) retains A-F. Ab, as we should now expect, is always unprepared (bars 5, 14, 23), and this produces the startling pitch discontinuity in the desire theme in which 4-27 (on Bb, b. 17) is unconnected to 4-27/27B (on A, b. 18). The *différance* of Ab, its disruptive opening-up of possibility, is starkly revealed by Debussy's creation of oppositional space within Tprog, since Debussy's troping of Tprog rejects the contiguous common tones that ground the syntax of Wagner's progression.<sup>75</sup>

Level *D*, derived from the common-tones reduction of level *C*, describes a structural model grounded in the repetition of top-voice progressions and interval

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<sup>73</sup> Mallarmé, 'Le mystère dans les lettres', trans. Anthony Hartley in *The Penguin Poets: Mallarmé* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965), p. 202.

<sup>74</sup> 'Liaison occurs in Harmony when this Harmony proceeds according to a progression of fundamental Tones [*Sons*] such that some of the Tones accompanying those that are quitted remain to accompany those to which one progresses. [...] There is always *Liaison* between dissonant Chords in that the Dissonance is prepared'. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Dictionnaire de Musique*, ed. Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger, et. al., in *Oeuvres complètes*, Vol. 5 (Paris: Gallimard, 1995), p. 873.

<sup>75</sup> In addition, *liaison* uncovers a supplementary logic for Debussy's control of parallel chords in contrary motion. In bars 8-12, the contrary motion of bass 5ths and top-voice 4ths creates a maximal common-tone structure, as do the ascending triads and descending bass of b. 20. See Ex. 17, level *C*.



structures (white notes indicate the first occurrence of a pitch, black notes indicate pitch retention). On this level, the A (^5) of the Destiny music (bars 1-4, 8-12, 21-22) controls all the pitch material associated with the characters: the 5-5-5 interval progression between outer parts departs from A which is then present in the octaves of the subsequent progressions 6-b7-8, (b7) 6-[4]-b7-8.<sup>76</sup> Thus, these progressions serve to vary the interval tensions between the bass and the repeated prolongation of A in the top voice (A-G-Ab-A), a complete neighbour-note structure prolonged by the passing Ab. Essentially, then, level *D* demonstrates relations of consonance and dissonance, and the prolongational rather than structural role of the non-diatonic. While this degree of abstraction may seem to entail no more than the dialectic of essential and inessential, this single opposition should be understood to express, on the one hand, the subordination of the characters to Destiny, and on the other, to define the function of opposition in level *A* (in a temporal context, what is opposed there animates the diatonic by the secondary and 'inessential').

Because they are so strikingly regular, the four sequences in the top voice (A-G-Ab-A)<sup>77</sup> unveil the truth of temporal repetition as conceived by Kierkegaard and Bergson. Just as Bergson's 'undifferentiated flowing' expresses the ground of being as *durée* in which repetition is discernable on reflection, so the repeated sequences in the top voice arise from a continuum (and therefore are not segmented in my notation) undifferentiated until the progression from one note to another is made discrete by prolongation. And just as Bergson's repetition in the present is always transformed by other currents from other 'locations' in the past, each top-voice sequence is transformed in texture and relational potential by the linear currents in other strata of the Prelude.

If music analysis, as I have conducted it here, can allegorise Bergson's method of philosophical reflection and intuition, then the reduction of the temporal to the spatial can be resisted by, to paraphrase Bergson, beginning with the appearance of dissociation and proceeding to the humming of music's depths. The reduction in level *D* is, to my ears,

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<sup>76</sup> The relatively unstable function of A as interval 6 in b. 20 delays stability until the beginning of scene 1 (b. 24).

<sup>77</sup> The exception is the third sequence which lacks Ab.

only a structural murmur, but it is, I think, the Idea to which Debussy's musical *correspondances* refer.

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## Music Examples

- 1 Debussy, Prelude to *Pelléas et Mélisande*, short score reduction
- 2 Wagner, *Parsifal*, Introduction to Act 3, bars 1-18, paradigmatic analysis
- 3 Prelude to *Pelléas*, bars 1-23, paradigmatic analysis
- 4a Introduction to *Parsifal*, Act 3, lexia
- 4b Prelude to *Pelléas*, lexia
- 5 Introduction to *Parsifal*, Act 3, bars 1-9, fifths
- 6 Prelude to *Pelléas*, bars 1-2, fundamental bass
- 7 Prelude, character-themes
- 8 Prelude, bars 1-13, paradigmatic analysis 1
- 9 Prelude, bars 1-7, paradigmatic analysis 2
- 10 Prelude, bars 1-7, paradigmatic analysis 3
- 11 Prelude, bars 1-23, paradigmatic analysis (Ex. 3 reproduced)
- 12 Prelude, bars 1-23, second-beat emphasis
- 13 Prelude, durational structure
- 14 Prelude, bars 13-23, melodic metonymy
- 15 Prelude, bars 2, 4, 12, metonymy and set 4-26\*I
- 16 Analysis of the 'Tristan' progression
- 17 Prelude, synoptic analysis
- 18 Prelude, bars 16-19, set 4-27/27B





# EXAMPE 1

EXAMPE 1: PRELUDE, PELELEAS ET MEASUREMENT, START SCORE REDUCTION

Handwritten musical score for Example 1, measures 1-8. The score is written on a grand staff with five systems. It includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like 'p' and 'f'. There are also some handwritten annotations like 'vle', 'vic', and 'temp.'.

Handwritten musical score for Example 1, measures 9-16. The score continues on a grand staff with five systems. It includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like 'p' and 'f'. There are also some handwritten annotations like 'vle', 'vic', and 'temp.'.

EXAMPLE 2: WAGNER, PARSIFAL, INTRODUCTION  
TO ACT 3. PARADIGMATIC ANALYSIS

A1 B1 C1 D1

Flamewind

Kundry

Prophecy/Yearning

D2

C2

A2

A3

E1 + E1

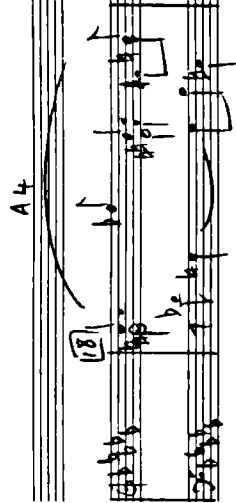
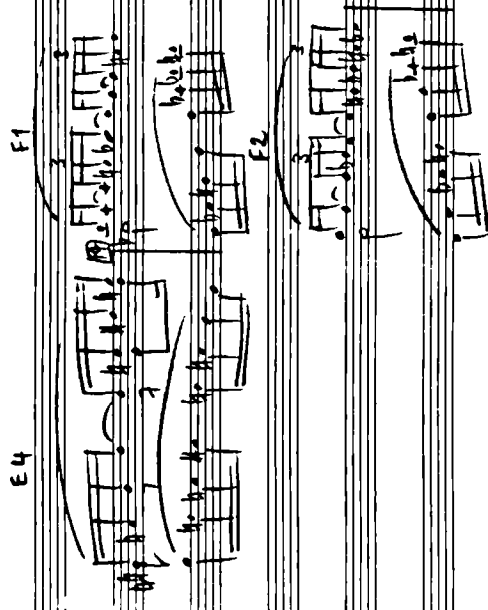
E2 + E2

E3

[ALIGN WITH PAGE 2]

# EXAMPLE 2 (PAGE 2)

[Align with page 1]



EXAMPLE 3: Prelude to *Pelléas*, bars 1-23, paradigmatic analysis

The image displays a musical score for the Prelude to *Pelléas*, bars 1-23, with a paradigmatic analysis. The score is written for piano and includes a detailed analysis of the first 23 bars. The analysis is organized into two main sections: "1 (bars 1-7)" and "2 (bars 8-17)".

The first section, "1 (bars 1-7)", contains two measures of music. The first measure is labeled with a circled number 1 and a circled letter 'a'. The second measure is labeled with a circled number 1 and a circled letter 'b'. The analysis includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and bar lines, as well as a series of numbers (1, 2, 3) and letters (a, b, c) indicating specific musical elements and their relationships.

The second section, "2 (bars 8-17)", contains two measures of music. The first measure is labeled with a circled number 2 and a circled letter 'a'. The second measure is labeled with a circled number 2 and a circled letter 'b'. The analysis includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and bar lines, as well as a series of numbers (1, 2, 3) and letters (a, b, c) indicating specific musical elements and their relationships.

The score is written in a standard musical notation with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The analysis includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and bar lines, as well as a series of numbers (1, 2, 3) and letters (a, b, c) indicating specific musical elements and their relationships.

# EXAMPLE 4a

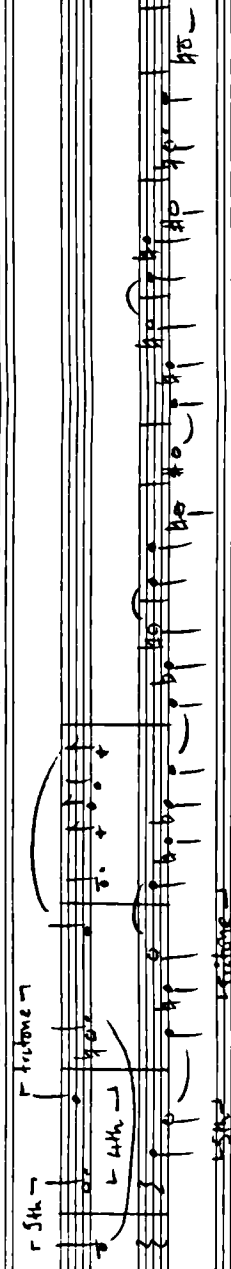
EXAMPLE 4a: INTRODUCTION TO PARALLEL,  
ACT 3, LETA

LETA

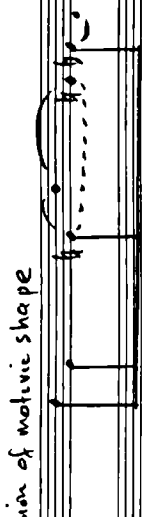
1a



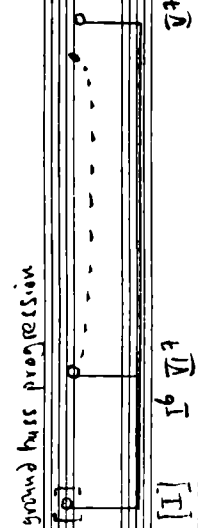
1b



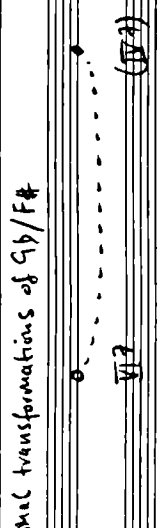
1c



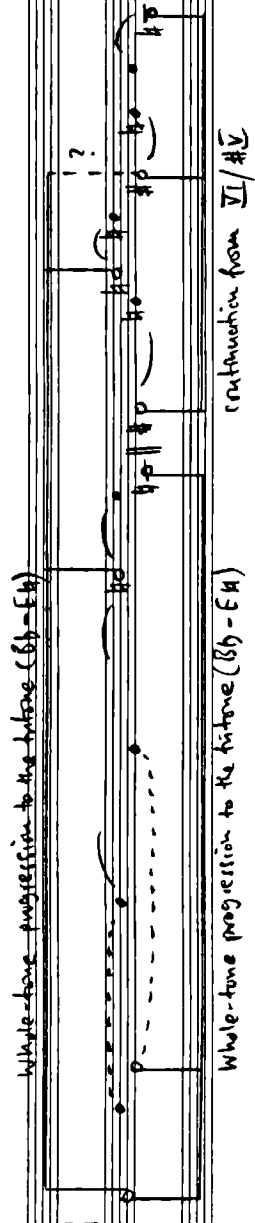
2



3



4



Motivic Shape

1a

1a

1b

1b

1c

1c

2

2

4

4

EXAMPLE 5: INTRODUCTION TO PARSIFAL, ACT 3, FIFTHS, BARS 1-9.

Handwritten musical notation for Example 5, showing staves 1 through 9. The notation is in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It features a series of chords and melodic lines across two staves. The first staff has a treble clef and the second has a bass clef. The notation includes various accidentals (sharps, flats, naturals) and ties. The bars are numbered 1 through 9 at the top.

EXAMPLE 6: PRELUDE, FUNDAMENTAL BASS, BARS 1-2.

Handwritten musical notation for Example 6, showing staves 1 and 2. The notation is in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It features a series of chords and melodic lines across two staves. The first staff has a treble clef and the second has a bass clef. The notation includes various accidentals (sharps, flats, naturals) and ties. The bars are numbered 1 and 2 at the bottom.

# EXAMPLE 7: PRELUDE, CHARACTER-THEMES

DEMIY

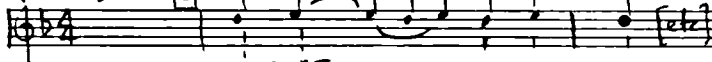
1



3-11 + 4-26° I

GOLAUD

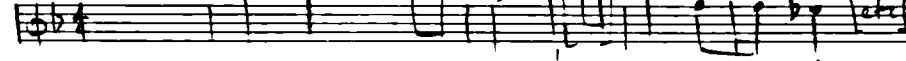
5



4-25° I

MELISANDE

16



4-25° I

'4-27''

PELLÉAS (ACT 2, scene 1, bs 1-2)



Sra +

(unaccompanied)

arabesque continuation

(cf. MELISANDE, bs 16 ff.)



EXAMPLE 8: PRELUDE, BARS 1-13, PARADIGMATIC ANALYSIS 1

Handwritten musical notation for Example 8, Bars 1-13, Paradigmatic Analysis 1. The notation is written on a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) with a key signature of one flat (Bb) and a common time signature (C). The first system shows measures 1 and 3, grouped by a bracket labeled 'A'. The second system shows measures 5 and 6, grouped by a bracket labeled 'B'. The third system shows measure 7, which is a whole rest, followed by a measure with a whole note and a cross symbol, grouped by a bracket labeled 'I'. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and accidentals.

Handwritten musical notation for Example 8, Bars 1-13, Paradigmatic Analysis 1. The notation is written on a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) with a key signature of one flat (Bb) and a common time signature (C). The first system shows measures 8 and 10, grouped by a bracket labeled 'A'. The second system shows measures 12 and 13, grouped by a bracket labeled 'B1'. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and accidentals.

# EXAMPLES 9 AND 10

EXAMPLE 9: PRELUDE, BARS 1-7, PARADIGMATIC ANALYSIS 2

EXAMPLE 10: PRELUDE, BARS 1-7, PARADIGMATIC ANALYSIS 3

The image displays two staves of handwritten musical notation. The notation includes notes, rests, and various annotations. The left staff is labeled 'EXAMPLE 9' and the right staff is labeled 'EXAMPLE 10'. The notation is written in a style that suggests a prelude or a short piece. The annotations include letters (a, p, q, r, v, u, x), numbers (1, 2, 3, 4, 5), and symbols (circles, brackets, arrows). The notation is written in a style that suggests a prelude or a short piece. The annotations include letters (a, p, q, r, v, u, x), numbers (1, 2, 3, 4, 5), and symbols (circles, brackets, arrows).



EXAMPLE 11: Prelude, bars 1-23, paradigmatic analysis (Ex. 3 reproduced)

The musical score for Example 11, bars 1-23, is presented in two systems. The first system contains bars 1-7, and the second system contains bars 8-23. The score is written in a single system with a key signature of one flat and a common time signature. The analysis includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and bar lines, along with a detailed paradigmatic analysis of the melodic and harmonic structure. The analysis is organized into groups labeled 1, 2, and 3, with sub-labels like 1.11, 1.12, 2.11, 2.12, 3.11, 3.12, 3.21, and 3.22. The notation includes various accidentals (sharps, flats, naturals) and articulation marks (accents, slurs). The score is written in a single system with a key signature of one flat and a common time signature.

**System 1 (Bars 1-7):**

- Bar 1: 1.111 a
- Bar 2: 1.112 a'
- Bar 3: 1.121 b
- Bar 4: 1.122 b'
- Bar 5: 1.11
- Bar 6: 1.12
- Bar 7: 1.2

**System 2 (Bars 8-23):**

- Bar 8: 2.111 a1
- Bar 9: 2.112 a1'
- Bar 10: 2.121 b1
- Bar 11: 2.122 b1'
- Bar 12: 2.11
- Bar 13: 2.12
- Bar 14: 2.211 d
- Bar 15: 2.212 d
- Bar 16: 3.111 f
- Bar 17: 3.112 f'
- Bar 18: 3.11
- Bar 19: 3.12
- Bar 20: 3.21
- Bar 21: 3.22
- Bar 22: 3.21
- Bar 23: 3.22

EXAMPLE 12: Prelude, bars 1-23, second-beat emphasis

The musical score is written for three staves (treble, bass, and tenor) in a 12-measure system. The key signature is one flat (B-flat). The score is divided into two main sections by a dashed line. The first section contains measures 1 through 10, and the second section contains measures 11 through 23. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and accidentals. A vertical dashed line is drawn through the first measure of each system. A horizontal dashed line connects the end of the first system to the beginning of the second system. A solid line with an arrow points from the end of the second system back to the beginning of the first system, indicating a repeat or a return to the beginning.

①  
②  
③  
④  
⑤  
⑥  
⑦  
⑧  
⑨  
⑩  
⑪  
⑫  
⑬  
⑭  
⑮  
⑯  
⑰  
⑱  
⑲  
⑳  
㉑  
㉒  
㉓

# EXAMPLE 13: PRELUDE, DURATIONAL STRUCTURE

EXAMPLE 13

COUPLET 1

COUPLET 2

6 + 1 6

2 + 2 + 2 + 2

1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4

1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4

6 4

2 + 2 + 2 + 1 + 2 + 1

1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4

1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4

COUPLET 3

COUPLET 4

1. The first step is to identify the problem. This involves understanding the current situation and what needs to be improved.

2. The second step is to set clear goals. These should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound.

3. The third step is to develop a plan. This involves identifying the resources needed and the steps to be taken.

4. The fourth step is to implement the plan. This involves putting the plan into action and monitoring progress.

5. The fifth step is to evaluate the results. This involves comparing the actual results with the goals and identifying areas for improvement.

[illegible]

EXAMPLE 15: PRELUDE, BARS 2, 4, 12, METONYMY AND SET 4-26<sup>u</sup>I

[1] [2] [4]

Handwritten musical notation for Example 15, showing staves 1 and 2. Staff 1 (treble clef) contains two chords, both labeled "4-26<sup>u</sup> I". Staff 2 (bass clef) contains three notes, each with a vertical line extending downwards.

### EXAMPLE 16

PAN-A3 'B STAFF



EXAMPLE 17 (PAGE 1)

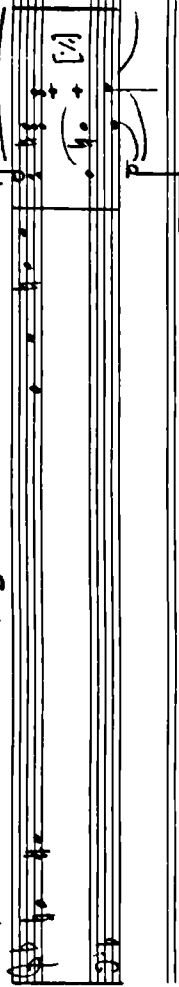




6-337 transition to: Dealing theme

A

7-350



2-51

3-11 [4-228] 3-11B

Gilbert's theme: bar.

6-327

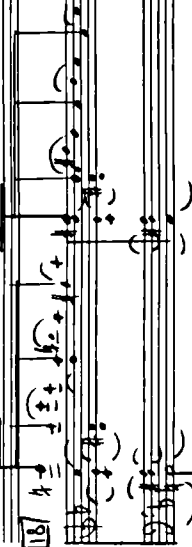
7-350

6-226

4-264 4-268 4-274 4-278

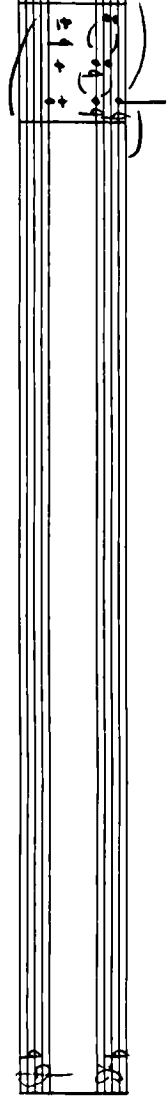
(dearie theme)

7-350



4-27 4-278 [1.] [1.] 4-27 4-278 [1.] [1.]

5-340



4-240

[ALIGN WITH PAGE 4]

Handwritten musical notation on a five-line staff. The notation includes various notes, rests, and accidentals. Above the staff, there are handwritten labels: "6-33" above a bracketed section, "5-248 (with 64)" above another bracketed section, and "6-31" above a third bracketed section. Below the staff, there are handwritten notes: "4-248" with an arrow pointing to a specific note, "[T] minor" with an arrow pointing to another note, and "5-308" with an arrow pointing to a third note. A bracket labeled "minor" is placed over a group of notes.

[ALIGN WITH PAGE 3]

[B]

EXAMPLE 17 (PAGE 4)

Handwritten musical notation on a five-line staff. The notation includes various notes, rests, and accidentals. Above the staff, there are handwritten labels: "4-27 4-278" above a bracketed section, "4-268" above another bracketed section, and "3-11 3-11 4-248 2-501" above a third bracketed section. Below the staff, there are handwritten notes: "I" above a bracketed section, "D" above another bracketed section, "WT" above a third bracketed section, and "D" above a fourth bracketed section. A bracket labeled "minor" is placed over a group of notes.

[C]

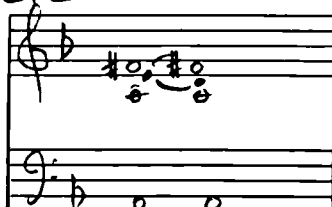
Handwritten musical notation on a five-line staff. The notation includes various notes, rests, and accidentals. Above the staff, there are handwritten labels: "4-27 4-278" above a bracketed section, "4-268" above another bracketed section, and "3-11 3-11 4-248 2-501" above a third bracketed section. Below the staff, there are handwritten notes: "I" above a bracketed section, "D" above another bracketed section, "WT" above a third bracketed section, and "D" above a fourth bracketed section. A bracket labeled "minor" is placed over a group of notes.

[D]



EXAMPLE 18: PRELUDE, BARS 16-19, 4-27/27B.

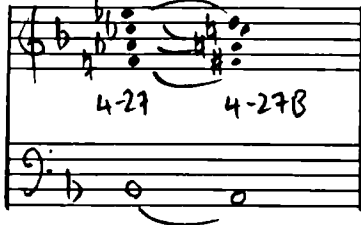
18 19



common tones in bars 18, 19

4-27 4-27B

17 18



4-27 4-27B

middleground progression, 4-27/4-27B, bars 17-18.